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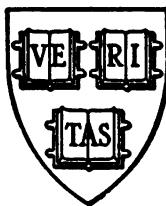
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THE HEALER

ROBERT HERRICK

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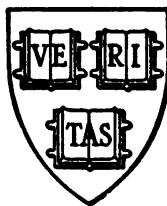
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THE HEALER



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THE HEALER

BY

ROBERT HERRICK

AUTHOR OF "TOGETHER"

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PART ONE



THE HEALER

I

THE log-house with its broad low roof nestled prettily among the thick firs of the forest, — a bit of the old wilderness still untouched that reached from the northern mountains in a long blunt headland like a stubby finger into the lake. The camp, of which the log-house was the centre, fronted full south across the Lake towards the rough fields spotted with blackening stumps that surrounded the Settlement. A wide piazza reached to the edge of the rocky cliff, from which could be seen and heard the little blue waves thirty feet below as they lapped the clean pebbly shore.

A young woman stood on the piazza looking out upon the Lake, shading her eyes with one hand against the morning sun ; she swept the broad expanse of water steadily with her gaze as if searching for some expected object. A number of small sail-boats and sailing canoes were flitting about in the wide bay or making towards the narrow reach of water that led past the headland into the upper Lake. But none of them satisfied her eager look. The Japanese cook, who was examining the contents of the fish box below at the boat-house, looked up and shook his head, murmuring softly to himself. A complaining voice came from within the log-house.

"Do you see them, Vera?"

"Not yet, Aunty," the young woman replied in a low, controlled voice, and turning towards the open door, she added, "It's hardly time to expect them yet, is it?"

"Dr. Percy said it wasn't far," the older woman said, "and it's almost noon now."

Mrs. Goodnow came out on the piazza and scanned the blue waters. She was a thin, slight woman dressed in black lace with glittering stones on her aged, withered fingers. Her eyes still shone keenly in the wrinkled face as she glanced swiftly out across the bay to the little Settlement where the flags above the wooden summer hotel were waving in the breeze. With a shrug of her shoulders expressing mingled indifference and impatience she turned back to the house.

"You know the guide said that he lived in a valley beyond the head of the Lake, and he may be away when Percy gets there," the younger woman suggested.

"Oh, of course in this horrible place anything may happen!" the older woman burst forth. "I can't understand how I let Nell and the Colonel persuade me to put myself at the end of the earth where there is no telegraph, no railroad — nothing civilized."

The young woman smiled slightly at this outburst.

"It hasn't been so bad until — until this accident. We've been very comfortable and Nell liked it. . . . How do you think she seems this morning?"

"No better . . . I can't tell. She talks about her eyes, not seeing clearly — everything in a mist, — oh, I should have done what I wanted to at first, taken her out of this

wilderness at once — at once,” she repeated with compressed lips.

“But Dr. Percy thought it was nothing serious — merely a slight bruise on the head where she hit that rock.”

“Dr. Percy!” Mrs. Goodnow exclaimed scornfully. “What does *he* know about anything except boats and tennis? . . . No, I should have taken her away or sent for some one from the city. Dr. Jenks would have come — and been here by this time.”

“Nell wouldn’t have it, you remember, and she seemed to be all right the next day.”

“In a place like this you are absolutely helpless!” She looked sourly over the smiling landscape of forest and lake, which lay stretched before them in the August sunlight.

“It might have been as bad anywhere else,” Vera replied soothingly.

“No, you can always get some one to help you — some good doctor who knows his business — at least you can *send* for one!”

She spoke with the air of one long accustomed to all the convenient appurtenances of a luxurious civilization, who had at the most merely to write a few words on a yellow slip of paper to summon aid from the ends of the earth.

“Well,” the younger woman persisted, turning again to look over the Lake, “perhaps this man he’s gone for can tell us what to do. He has a great reputation up here. The guide was telling me this morning —”

“The guide! An ignorant half-breed, — what does he know about a doctor? He’s some country fakir, — greasy herb doctor, most likely — oh!”

"Dr. Percy has seen him, and he says the man has had training, is a graduate of a good school. He isn't any fakir."

"Then what is he doing 'way off here in the wilderness? There must be something wrong about him or he wouldn't have hidden himself away in this hole!" the old woman snapped acidly.

"We shall find out soon!"

"It makes no difference what he says—I shall take Nell away to-morrow if she's well enough to travel—or send for some one I know about!" She turned back to the house, her slight black figure stiff with resolution. A voice could be heard from within calling faintly. Just then the younger woman, who had lingered at the edge of the piazza, exclaimed:—

"There! They're coming!"

A sail-boat that had rounded the point while the two women were talking was ploughing swiftly towards the dock with a white ripple of foam falling from its prow. As the little boat veered to avoid a reef the figures of two men could be seen against the white sail.

"He's found him—I'm so glad!" the younger woman exclaimed, a confident smile lighting her pleasant face.

Mrs. Goodnow grunted her dubitation, but turned again to look at the boat.

"I'm sure he will be able to help us," Vera Councillor said buoyantly. Resting her smooth, firm hands on the railing she watched the boat glide up to the float. Her lips were parted as though she would like to call to the men, to hurry them.

The tall man standing in the prow of the boat, his hands

thrust carelessly in the pockets of his corduroy trousers, looked up at the camp, caught the young woman's eye, then dropped his examining glance to the boat-house, the Japanese servant, who, abandoning his fish, ran to fend off the boat. He jumped ashore leisurely, then waited while his companion made the boat fast, and followed him at a lazy pace up the wooden steps to the camp.

There the women were waiting, the younger one a little in advance of the other.

"I'm so glad you've come," she murmured to the little man, who arrived on the piazza puffing slightly and mopping his forehead. "Mrs. Goodnow is so uneasy."

"How is she?" he asked, anxiously; "any change?"
"Just the same."

Meanwhile the two women were rapidly examining the stranger. Mrs. Goodnow's critical glance swept from the large thin face, curiously pallid beneath the sparse black beard, over the gaunt figure clothed in a rough faded mackinaw and stained brown trousers, to the worn moccasins and coarse woollen socks. The man waiting at the edge of the piazza seemed to comprehend this supercilious examination. He frowned slightly, and the young woman noticed that his face became suddenly ugly, sullen.

"This is Dr. Holden," the young doctor said hastily. "Mrs. Goodnow, Miss Councillor."

The stranger barely nodded, and demanded roughly —
"Where's the sick woman?"

He stepped forward as though to enter the place at once, avoiding all preliminary explanation. But Mrs. Goodnow stood stiffly before the door, and the two confronted each

other in a hostile pause. The woman's face spoke plainly her suspicions of this uncouth backwoodsman, on whom she had secretly built great expectations. It was an awkward moment of suppressed antagonism from which an explosion was to be feared. The hotel doctor — a mere lad in clean white flannel — fidgeted in the rear. Then Vera Councillor, with a smile of sympathetic comprehension on her expressive lips, intervened.

"This way," she said, pointing to the end of the piazza, from which a door opened into a smaller cabin. "Your patient is here," she said, holding open the door, as the stranger hesitated slightly. With a shrug he followed the young woman into the darkened room.

"The light troubles her," she whispered to him as he crossed the threshold. Without replying, he strode noiselessly to the bed in the further corner of the room. There in an expanse of white linen lay a girl, her thick brown hair loosely rippling over the pillow. She opened her eyes, as if from sleep or revery, and looked up at the stranger with a confident yet wondering expression upon her childish face. Her lips trembled between pain and a smile of greeting.

Vera Councillor remained behind the doctor, closely watching the two, holding her breath. The others — the young doctor and the mother — came in and stood at the foot of the bed. Through the half-opened door the bright sunshine fell across the cabin room and touched the white surface of the bed. There was the hush of expectancy, unbroken except by the rustle of Mrs. Goodnow's silk waist as she moved hostilely.

The doctor knelt down beside the bed, frowning as if he

were focussing his eyes and also all his mind upon the sick girl, so that he might see clearly, even beneath the flesh. It was a long moment. . . . The girl looked back at his frowning face bravely at first, and the hopeful expression of normal, buoyant youth in her prevailed. Then the smile faded before the penetrating eyes. Lying there between two fluffy pillows, her rounded figure muffled by the thin blanket, her bare arms crossed before her, the white neck swelling gently with her breathing, she was all lovable, youthful, — a creature of fresh vigor suddenly arrested. . . .

Slowly her face blanched, a spasm of pain twisted the mouth, a look of terror came into the eyes.

“Tell me! What is the matter?” she whispered.

The doctor passed his hand slowly across the line of vision, watching the expression of the girl’s eyes.

“I — I don’t see well,” she murmured. “It seems far away — far off — everything!”

“How long has it been like that?” the doctor asked gently.

“I don’t know — yesterday and to-day.”

“It happened Monday,” the young doctor volunteered, coming forward to take part in the affair. “But she seemed all right at first.”

“How long has she been like this?” the other one demanded roughly, as if in accusation.

“Not more than a day — well — the symptoms were misleading,” the young man stammered. The other turned back to the patient and softly touched her head, pushing aside the waving hair.

“A slight contusion above the ear, as I told you,” the young doctor said. “You know she was diving from the

boat-house, and must have hit her head against a rock. After the first shock there were no symptoms,—no definite symptoms," he corrected himself, "until yesterday morning. Then the symptoms became more alarming." He stammered on, using the word "symptoms" again and again, until the other man shrugged his shoulders contemptuously.

"She seemed to be getting better until last night," Vera Councillor explained in ordinary language.

The doctor raised the white arm a few inches, let it fall, then passed his hands softly over the rounded figure, and his eyes fixed upon the face now white and blank. He seemed to be reading the body and the mind of the girl.

"We should have telegraphed at once for our city physician — I said so at the time — you never can tell!" Mrs. Goodnow said, aggressively. "I don't know why we are losing time like this!"

"The shock — the nervous shock — would account for the symptoms, don't you think?" the little doctor put in with a faint professional swagger. The stranger did not seem to hear them. He said to the girl:—

"You feel cold?"

She nodded.

"Your arm is heavy?"

"And my body — so heavy," she murmured, "when I try to move."

Her eyes opened more widely, as if in growing terror.

"What is it?" she whispered.

The long, bony fingers moved hither and thither, testing the flesh. Again he raised one arm, then the other, passed his hand to and fro before the girl's eyes. At last

he rested motionless on his knees, looking, looking as if to pierce the flesh, to discover the hidden error in the body before him.

"Is it anything serious?" the girl whispered. "Tell me!"

"Yes!" he replied gently. His hand touched her head where the hair pushed back showed an abrasion. The girl's eyes pleaded with him silently. Abruptly he rose and walked into the next room, as if to avoid the pleading glance. The young doctor followed, stammering, — "Slight concussion — it will pass off — rest, complete quiet for a few days, don't you think?"

The stranger started, as if a trance had been broken, and looked contemptuously at the young man in white flannels.

"Well, what do you think is the matter?" Mrs. Goodnow demanded irritably.

Her indignation, suppressed during the silent examination at the girl's bedside, broke out afresh. She had never been treated in this manner by any doctor.

"Paralysis," the stranger said sharply.

"Paralysis!" the mother cried.

Vera's hands, playing with nasturtiums in a large silver bowl, trembled, and the red flowers fell upon the floor.

"I didn't think it could be as bad as that," the young doctor said.

"Anybody could see what's the matter," the other replied shortly.

He looked speculatively over the large comfortable room of the cabin.

"What do you mean?" Mrs. Goodnow demanded.

"I mean," said the doctor, slowly, "your daughter has a

cerebral hemorrhage — pressure here!" He indicated the spot with his finger on his head. "Paralysis has set in already. You can see yourself that her limbs are numb, and her eyesight is affected."

"It will get worse?" Vera asked.

"Yes — unless the pressure is removed."

"How?"

"By an operation, of course —"

"We must send for Dr. Jenks — at once!" Mrs. Goodnow cried, bustling towards the door.

"Where to? The city? . . . Another twenty-four hours it might be too late." The man's tone was coldly informational.

"There must be some other good doctor we can get hold of."

"There's a doctor at Belle River. But he knows less than I do." The stranger smiled. "Besides, it would take eight hours to get him here — at least."

"Oh, these awful wild places!" the old woman complained, upbraiding the wilderness for her troubles. The stranger turned towards the door.

"You think that surgical interference is imperative?" the young doctor asked.

"If you want to save her!"

"Is it as serious as that?" Vera demanded, coming to him and standing between him and the door, as if to prevent his escape. "Is it — dangerous?"

"You mean fatal? . . . It is always dangerous to go into the brain, of course. But it is done — about two cases in five successfully."

"I won't hear of it!" the mother cried hysterically. "I won't believe it — until somebody besides a country doctor tells me it is so."

The stranger stepped nearer the door without a word, as if he considered the matter settled.

"I think," said the young doctor, assuming his professional air, "it would be well to have further consultation before undertaking such a major operation —"

"Are you sure?" the young woman demanded, with gleaming eyes.

"Perfectly."

"Another day would be too late?"

"Unless there were a miracle."

"And the operation has been done successfully?"

He nodded an answer to her intelligent eyes.

"I did it myself once — and the man lived."

"I won't hear of it! An operation like that — up here — no nurses!" Mrs. Goodnow clamored. And the young doctor murmured his approval.

"I'm sure it would be taking a large risk."

"Of course," the stranger sneered. "One takes large risks — before death!"

"It may not be so at all," Mrs. Goodnow protested. All her dissatisfaction with the situation rang in her domineering voice. The jet ornaments about her withered neck rustled defiance at this uncouth stranger, who dared suggest such a preposterous invasion of her ordered world.

The stranger turned away, and this time he stepped outside the house. The matter was finished, it seemed, so far as he was concerned.

But a cry from the adjoining room where the sick girl lay arrested him.

"I must speak to him! Please, Vera — call him back! I must, must!"

It was a voice of one in pain, — a cry of appeal. The stranger hesitated, then turned and entered the room again. The sick girl had struggled up on her pillows. Feebly raising a hand to her head she pushed back the tumbled brown hair from her forehead. Her flushed childish face with the wide appealing eyes seemed more lovely than before.

"Come here!" she cried. "Don't leave me."

She stretched out uncertainly a hand to him. Mrs. Goodnow, who had rustled into the room, made a motion to defend his approach, but brushing her aside the doctor took the slight figure in his arms and rested it gently on the pillows. With one hand clasping her arm he looked down into her frightened eyes.

"Tell me what it is — what will happen to me," she whispered.

The rough stranger, whose manner had been overbearing and contemptuous to the others, also indifferent, became suddenly timid, hesitant.

"Tell me — I can bear it!" she urged.

"The trouble is here," he said, touching the rippling hair above the temple.

"Shall I — shall I — die?" She brought out the word with a sigh of effort.

There was a moment of silence in the room before he spoke, while they two, as if removed, far away from the others, looked at the thing before them. Then he spoke, firmly, gravely: —

"Perhaps, — unless something is done to help you."

"It's a lie!" the mother cried.

A slight contraction of the girl's brow indicated that she had heard the words. She said:—

"Tell me everything."

And in a few words he described the thing to her, what had happened, what must happen to her soon unless the miracle came; also the operation he had advised, — the cutting of the skull, the relief of the spot of pressure on the brain — all. She listened intently, and when he had finished she bent her head simply as a child might proffer a hand to have a splinter taken out, saying:—

"You will do it for me? You will save me from death — or worse?" ✓

The mother struggled forward, protesting incoherently until the girl calmed her, saying:—

"Please! Mother!"

And all was silence there again while these two alone debated the question. A curious tremor shook the man's arm. He released his hold upon the girl, and standing above her, his long fingers merely touching her hair, looked and looked.

"You can do it!" she whispered. "You will do it?"

"Yes," he answered. "I will do it!"

Immediately there rose a clamor of protesting voices, the mother crying out — "I won't have it — leave this house," — and the little doctor saying in a flustered manner, "You can't do that, you know!"

The girl had closed her eyes wearily and lay white and still upon her pillows. She had made her choice, it seemed, and now she waited for him to perform his part.

"Take that woman from the room," he said to Vera Councillor peremptorily. "Let the girl have quiet! . . . You," he said to the little doctor, "come with me. I shall need you."

Suddenly, with that decisive "yes," he had become another man, no longer indifferent, hesitant, timid, but commanding and assured. He turned again to the girl, who opened her eyes and looked up at him, a little smile struggling to her lips.

"I shall come back soon," he said. "We must lose no more time."

The smile fluttered up over her face, and she closed her eyes.

"Now!" he said briskly to the little doctor, and strode outdoors with the other at his heels.

Inside the large living room Vera Councillor was dealing with the mother, her calm voice interrupted by the woman's hysterical cries, — "He shall never do it — I won't have it — we can send for some one — it will take only two days to get a doctor from the city — no nurses, nothing — oh, oh, — why did I ever come up to this horrible place!" . . .

"Nell has decided for herself," the calm voice was saying. "It is her chance — her one chance."

The little doctor followed submissively, like a clerk with his orders, behind the stranger, down the long flight of wooden steps to the boat-house, and hastened to unmoor the sail-boat and get up sail. Vera Councillor, looking from the door of the camp, could see the tall, gaunt man in the stern, his hand on the rudder, apparently giving orders to the little doctor. "All of a man — that one!" she murmured to herself, as the little boat heeled over under the freshening breeze.

II

To continue in the words of Vera Councillor to her most intimate correspondent of that period :—

“More has happened to us in the last twenty-four hours than I can possibly put on paper. In this remote corner of the wilderness the wholly unexpected has come down upon us — in a flood. There was a dreadful accident to Nell four days ago. I will say at once that the crisis is over, and I think all will be well. She will recover wholly, thanks to — no, I must return to the very beginning and try to tell my story in orderly fashion !

“You know how Nell and I persuaded ‘Aunty,’ as I always call Nell’s mother, to accept the Colonel’s offer of his camp at Lake Sanguishine this summer. They are still in mourning for Mr. Goodnow, and Aunty is so difficult to manage among strangers. And we wanted something different, both Nell and I. We found it ! Sanguishine is far, far north in the depth of the Canadian wilderness. ‘Nothing between us and the North Star,’ as the guide says. You go north as far as the railroad will carry you, then crawl for a day through the woods over a rough road beside a roaring river to the end of the Lake, then by boat to the Settlement on the other side. Here you are quite beyond the ordinary world, in a land of queer ‘lumber jacks’ and half-breed trappers, a few

fishermen and hunters from the cities, like the Colonel, and that is all ! It is lovely, too, — wonderful in its way. But I can't stop to paint the scene : you must supply landscape for yourself. Endless lakes and rivers, a low range of mountains across the northern horizon, and everywhere the dark wilderness. The Colonel's new lumber company is doing its best to destroy that, stripping all the valleys and floating the logs down the river to the railroad. This camp,—the Eyrie, they call it, — is very comfortable, as one might expect of the Colonel. There are a few other such camps about the Lake, and at the Settlement on the other shore is a barney sort of hotel,—first sign of the invaders. In the hotel, along with the usual summer trash, a nice young doctor, Percy Farrold, by name, fresh from his medical course, and paying his board, I suspect, by looking after possible invalids. One of the Colonel's friends brought him over to the Eyrie and he soon became, of course, Nell's summer experience.

“Imagine a growing affair between our lively Nell and this fresh-cheeked, well-bred little doctor — picnics about the Lake, canoe trips by moonlight; mama's peevish opposition, smilingly overridden by Nell. How could she expect a pretty girl of twenty not to try her hand on such an easy subject as Dr. Percy ?

“There was the daily swim. He taught her to dive, and there all our trouble began. They went in off the boat-house just below the camp. They dove from the roof, straight down. Poor Nell discovered a sunken rock that no one knew was there — in a word the accident !

“At first it seemed nothing at all, a mere bruise. When she came up she was a bit faint, but she insisted on diving

again before coming in to dress. Dr. Percy tried to persuade her to rest—a mere boy, that fellow, for all his degree! After luncheon she lay down of her own accord, complaining of a headache. Dr. Percy came over to prescribe, and there was a doll's play between them,—the flirtation of puppies. The doctor ordered rest, a sleeping powder. We all thought nothing of it. And the next day Nell insisted upon getting up and dressing before Dr. Percy came. You should have seen his professional manner!

"But the next day there was no more play. Nell was ill,—even Dr. Percy could see that. He talked about a nervous shock,—rest and quiet,—and left more soothing powders. All that day and the next something heavy seemed to come over the camp. I know now what it was—fear! Then it seemed merely the loss of Nell's singing voice, her laughter, and the light in her eyes. She lay in her bed so still, so heavy, scarcely opening her eyes. Aunty fussed, of course, but accepted Dr. Percy's assurance that it was 'nothing serious.' In the afternoon the big Canadian guide,—a half-breed follower of the Colonel's,—came to her door and looked at her lying still in the bed, and shook his head. He adores her as we all do. Then he came to me and said:—

"'Mees,—*she* must have the doctor!'

"'But Jean,' I said, 'she has all the doctor there is—he was here the whole morning.'

"'Not him!' Deep scorn. 'A real doctor—the healer—'

"'Who?' I said, thinking by chance some one of reputation had come into the neighborhood without our knowing it.

"But so far as I could make out his patois he wanted us to call in some wonderful wild man of the woods, a herb doc-

tor, who lived off over the hills in a neighboring valley. I told Aunty and Nell of it, and we laughed together over Jean's 'healer,' picturing him as a long-bearded fakir, cunning and dirty and ignorant, the sort that would impress these simple people. At the end, however, Nell closed her eyes wearily, murmuring, 'Why not?' I could see she was reaching out for some help beyond what Dr. Percy could offer. That afternoon she sank farther into a sort of stupor, and when Dr. Percy came over in the evening he was clearly frightened. I saw at once that he knew nothing at all about her case. Aunty talked of telegraphing to the city for a doctor — a matter of days.

"We might get Holden over,' he suggested. 'He's had more hospital experience than I.'

"Who is Holden?" I asked.

"And it seems Holden was the guide's medicine-man. Dr. Percy had met him once at the Settlement, — a rough specimen, he said, in appearance, but no fakir, with a fine education and evident talent. He had buried himself in this wilderness for some unknown reason, and had got a great reputation among the natives, the lumber men and half-breeds. 'There are stories about him, you know,' he said helplessly. 'What?' I asked. 'Oh, I guess he's pretty rough — dissipated, lives the life of the people, that's all, — just not a gentleman.'

"We were beyond thinking of such things! 'Take the guide and find him,' I urged. Even Aunty was for clutching at any straw, though she wanted to send telegrams down to the railroad also. . . . So another night went by, awful — and we dragged ourselves through it somehow, with the

desperate hope of this stranger. Nell lay in her heavy stupor.

"In the morning Percy fetched the doctor in his sail-boat,—a great lump of a man, with long thin arms and legs, a bony face half covered with a scrubby black beard,—fine eyes, though, under his mop of tousled hair. He was dressed like a lumber jack. Not a herb doctor, surely, but hardly more promising at first view! I confess to disappointment. I suppose I had let my imagination play overnight—and he did not seem on the surface the 'healer' to lead us out of our distress. You know Aunty's manner with any one she thinks she can bully. She was at her worst that morning,—insulted him before he had crossed the threshold. But he had his revenge later.

"After he had seen Nell he told us that the only chance was an immediate operation. 'I have telegraphed for competent advice,' said Aunty. Hard on poor Dr. Percy, that! 'Another day's delay would be fatal.' He had her at the sharp corner. But no—she was obstinate—would take the risk,—even with her daughter's life at stake. He was leaving the place in disdain. I had done what I could to detain him, for I felt somehow that *he knew*. But in the end Nell settled the matter herself!

"She called him back. She wanted to know the worst. He told her all—brutally, I thought. Perhaps it was best. He described the horrible operation necessary, the small chance even at the best. She never faltered. Those two debated the issue and *she* decided. 'Can you?' 'I can.' 'Will you?' And after a moment's dreadful pause, 'I will!'

"Aunty bawled, of course, would never consent, and all that. He ignored her utterly. I did my best to calm her, for I saw it must be done. Afterwards we were all swept completely from the scene — even little Dr. Percy, with his funny professional importance, his lover's hopes. For those two, as if they were quite alone in the world, removed from us to some far-off place where they saw death, looked death in the face. His eyes asked, 'Have you the courage?' Her eyes said, 'I have — and faith in you!'

"I have been asking myself since, — 'What made that faith, so utter, so swift? What made our simple little Nell suddenly meet her Fate, take the choice upon herself, and will to put herself in the hands of this rough stranger?' . . . Well, he went off to get ready, and I was left to subdue poor Aunty as best I might."

After a break, the story continued in a firmer script:—
"I can write only at odd moments when my patient sleeps. You see I am nurse for the present. Aunty wanders about the camp, sending the guide off with telegrams, lamenting the lack of a telephone. . . .

"To return, Nell was wonderful all through. After the doctors had gone to make their preparations, she lay with a peaceful look, confidently expecting her fate. And such a smiling glance of hope as she gave him when he next entered the room, the shining instruments in his hands. Dr. Percy followed him about like a dog while they made ready; he had been conquered, too! Of course Aunty burst out again, — 'she should hold him responsible,' — 'it was done against her wishes,' etc. He paid not the slightest heed. Only when

Nell said gently, 'Please, mother, don't !' he turned to me — 'Take that woman away and keep her out of the room,' he said. Aunty went, but she will never forgive him, no matter if he has saved her child's life — or more. . . . When I got back to the sick room, they were about to begin, — the things were ready, the doctors bare-armed and coatless. Dr. Holden was standing above Nell, holding her hands in his as if to give her the last word of courage. But she did not need it ! It seemed almost that Percy and I ought not to be there, to witness this moment between them with its intimacy. His look revealed her soul, and she met it — serenely. . . .

"I have never seen an operation, nothing more than when a dog's paw was put into splints. When I tell you that I thought of nothing all that time, — just did what *he* wanted done, instinctively, you will understand. First the ether sleep. To see Nell fade away from us, with that gay little smile still on her lips, — a smile of confidence and love of life, — just a gay little wave of her hand as when she dove — well, I had tears in my eyes and the basin I held shook so that I had to put it down. . . . They cut away her hair, turned back the flesh in a little flap, — the words somehow make me shiver more than the fact did ! Then the bone, until the brain itself lay bare — I won't go farther. He worked so swiftly, so surely, without a word, a spare movement of hand or eye ! There was just Dr. Percy's loud breathing — his hands were damp and shook, poor boy ! He would teach her to dive straight down into the water towards death !

"So she lay there like a fair clay image, and he did his work, taking that terrible, narrow chance for her. When it was

all over, the bandages placed, Nell still under the ether, he came back for a moment into the room, knelt beside the bed, devouring her with those piercing eyes, counting her heart beats — I shall never forget it all. ‘She will get well?’ I whispered. I had to say something,—it had been too much! ‘No one can tell,’ he said harshly, and walked out of the room over into the woods, brushing Aunty aside when she tried to waylay him. I saw him swinging down the path to the headland beyond the camp. When he came back Nell was waking from the ether. He left Percy and me on watch, with instructions, and went off again. Aunty said he was afraid to stay! . . . You must know that this strange Wild Man of the woods,—this Healer, as the ignorant people hereabouts call him,—is not handsome,—far from it. He is a tall, rough fellow, rather over thirty years old, I should say, with a bony face like one of these northern headlands, and what is curious with the outdoor life he leads, very pale,—pallid,—and thin. He looks as if he might have come through some terrible disease himself, and had not quite got over it. It is only when he is fired with a purpose, as just now at work upon Nell, that he becomes something important—another person altogether. Otherwise he would be repulsive. A dull, loutish backwoodsman you would call him, very likely, unless you had seen, as I have, the lamp lighted within.”

Again there was a break of several days in Miss Councillor’s correspondence, and when she resumed, the lines of her bold hand ran jubilantly up the page as follows: . . . “Now the triumph! Everything has progressed steadily as it

ought — Nell will live ! The great Jenks arrived this morning with another younger surgeon,— a brain specialist, I believe, and two nurses,— the result of Aunty's frantic appeals by telegraph to civilization, four days late ! Our Wild One was not here when they came — purposely, I believe. Dr. Percy met them, of course. 'Not your work,' the great Jenks remarked at the first sight. Poor Percy ! I must say he gave generous praise to the Wild One. 'Astonishingly neat job,' the other one said, after looking at the wound. Then they both asked questions of me and Percy, and at the end Dr. Jenks turned to Aunty, who hovered there. 'You are to be congratulated, Madam,' he said. 'Not five men I know of on this side of the water could perform that operation properly. And you had the luck to find a sixth up here in the wilderness — marvellous, indeed. Where is the man ?'

"Nell smiled mischievously at me while Aunty stammered, 'I wanted them to wait until you came—'. 'Too late, then — not an hour was to be lost — you took the one chance you had.' Aunty was subdued at last. She whimpered, 'I have always been used to the best doctors — of good standing.' Jenks laughed. 'I should have let Savage here do the thing. He's one of the five — the best one, too.' That little, fat, bald-headed thing — think of it ! 'But no better than the one you found. I want to see him.' 'He comes when he likes,' Aunty complained. 'You can never tell what he will do.' Percy explained, 'He lives a good ten miles from here over a rough trail.' 'Where does he practice — keep his hand in ?' the little brain surgeon inquired. 'A thing like that can't be done off the bat, you know.' The

Great One was puzzled. So the doctors, still discussing our Wild Man, went out to luncheon, which was one of those frightful feeds Aunty loves to set before mankind. They gorged. The fat-faced one ate and ate and drank champagne without a word to any of us, not a word. All he can do, apparently, is to *operate* on the brain.

"Presently after luncheon in came the Wild One,— paddled down the lake by an old half-breed, sitting squat in his crazy bark canoe and smoking his dirty black pipe. With his pipe still in his mouth he came up on the piazza where we were sitting, his old moccasins softly padding up the stairs, and when he saw the company, stopped, scowling. 'Hello!' bawled the great Jenks, 'what have we here?' 'It's he,— the Healer,' I whispered. Soon the brain specialist displayed cataleptic symptoms — note my medical style — he rushed up to the Wild One, and gasped, 'You! Here!' The Wild One, as if far from pleased, replied curtly, 'Well, what of it?' 'Oh, nothing,' the other said, 'only it explains the miracle — in part.' It seems that these two have met before, in some foreign hospital, I think. I tried to pump the little Savage afterwards, but all he would say was that he had known Fred Holden when he was a student, and had heard that Holden had disappeared, — given up medicine, he thought. . . . Aunty seemed somewhat appeased when she realized that the Wild One was acquainted with a real city doctor. But she will never recover from the moccasins and the corduroy breeches, the black pipe, and his, 'Take that woman out of the room!' Genius, for people like Aunty, must appear only in appropriate evening clothes.

"Well, the Wild One showed no emotion over the praise

that the doctors gave his work, — seemed rather annoyed. He's a sort of polyp, or dead log, when he is not in action. Not even Jenks's booming shout, 'With that kit of tools, too — and nothing, nothing else — sheer nerve, beside the skill.'

"'You have to use what you've got up here,' he growled.

"'Yes, of course — but I should never have gone in,' — horrid words! — the great Jenks admitted frankly.

"'It was the only chance.'

"'I know — I should have taken the *other* chance,' I heard him mutter to the Wild One, 'under the circumstances!'

"And he said quickly, '*She* wanted it — her chance!' So, you see, after all it was Nell who decided, who had the courage, and gave it to him.

"After the doctors had had another conference over Nell, they came out again on the piazza and Dr. Jenks sailed over to Aunty. 'Well, Mrs. Goodnow, there is nothing for us to do here, absolutely nothing. Everything is lovely. You can thank your God for a miracle, Madam! yes, a miracle of luck. I'll tell you straight I'd never have had the nerve to do what Dr. Holden did for you. . . . Of course the young lady isn't altogether out of the woods yet — there are some questions to be answered in such cases when the patient gets on farther. But you can hope for the best, and you are in as good hands as if you were in the city. Trust your Wild Man — give him your confidence!' Pleasant for Aunty, that! 'It's a grand place you have up here for an invalid to get well in,' he continued. 'Let her take her time. And now that we have made a three days' journey into the wilderness we must get a holiday, Savage

and I. There should be good fishing in this lake. How about it, Holden ?'

"But the Wild One had gone. I had seen him slip off while Jenks was expanding to Aunty. The canoe with the wooden Indian image was sliding up the lake in the afternoon sun. 'So boorish of him !' Aunty complained afterwards. The great Jenks was miffed — I could see that. The fat surgeon shook his bald head. 'Always was a crazy loon — doesn't care a hoot for man or woman.' And he never came back to see Nell the two days they stayed at the camp.

"Queer, wasn't it ? And foolish, if you look at it from a sensible point of view. I can't suppose he means to bury himself in this wilderness all his life, and Dr. Jenks is the last word in the city to-day, — with his large practice, his position at the medical school, and hospital connections. He could do everything for the Wild One if he had a mind to. So it became little Dr. Percy's chance to provide diversion for the Great One, and he took it as Percy always would, arranging everything for a mighty expedition, — guides, canoes, Indians, food — perhaps he supplied the fish, too. That boy should be a hotel clerk or some great man's secretary. . . .

"It was all very successful, I believe ; at least they brought back with them quantities of horrid looking fish, and the bald one had a beautiful crimson halo on his head. They went away this morning, leaving the trained nurses behind. Drat 'em ! It was too thrilling, — all of it, and I don't like losing my job. . . . There's the Wild One now ! Aunty has caught him. I can hear her frosty tones, saying, 'They must have thought it very queer, I'm sure, your not

being here.' He makes no excuses, and few remarks of any kind. Nell is calling. She will get beyond them all one of these days. . . .

"So we are in for an indefinite stay, at least another eight weeks, all of September and most of October. And the Wild One is to be in complete command, I can see that, until Nell takes hold herself. What will Aunty do ! She had her mind set on going abroad the end of September, and Aunty's little plans are never disturbed without a storm. The Goodnows, you must know, are omnipotent, — that is, they have been wise enough always to remain where they *are* omnipotent. Aunty finds it hard to be omnipotent in this wilderness.

"I am glad ! I am in love with this wild spot, — the gentle lap of the water on the rocks below, the great silent forest all around, the lazy life. And the Colonel's little Jap is as good as a Paris chef. In a fortnight the hotel will be closed, and we shall lose Dr. Percy. But the boy grows tiresome. He's a nonentity now. Nell will never look at him again. And as for the other — the Wild One, you may ask — that is too impossible even for my stimulated fancy ! "

III

THE summer wore away into a sunny, windless autumn. Day after day the lake lay like an unruffled, velvet pool, touching smoothly the black rocks, laced around its shores by the shadows from the encircling forest. The hotel across the bay, bereft of flaunting flags, had been deserted; the transient gayety of holiday life on the water had altogether disappeared. All the camps were closed except the Eyrie, whose mistress chafed at her enforced delay in the wilderness. The sick girl was about once more, — in the sunlight on the sheltered veranda, before the blazing fire. But the strange Wild One, as Vera Councillor had named the doctor, did not relax his domination. Having won the first battle for life itself with a flourish of trumpets, as it were, he was engaged in another, greater struggle, — a silent struggle in the autumnal peace for the true balance of mind that would mean health. Patient and doctor must go down together into the trough of despair, — that point of danger hinted at by the city physicians, — and meet there the darker enemies of life. More and more while this subtle hidden battle for full health was going on the doctor kept his patient apart from the others, took her in his canoe up the lake on little expeditions where she might lie in solitude and drink in the healing light and air undisturbed.

As the two women stood on the piazza one afternoon and

watched the doctor's canoe disappear around the little headland, there was an added frown on the wrinkled brow of Mrs. Goodnow, accentuating her habitual criticism of life. She disapproved of the Wild One and all his works, and if she dared would have forbidden these excursions. The younger woman, watching the small craft float out of sight in the yellow blaze of the afternoon sun, smiled to herself. She comprehended in part what this silent struggle meant, where the will of the physician was calling to the will of his patient.

"How much better Nell seems to-day!" she said encouragingly. "Happier, a little, I think. And beautiful—I never saw her look so — she has grown more lovely these last weeks!"

The mother shrugged her shoulders.

"I think she's very weak and pale," she snapped. "I hope we can get her away from here next week. I've asked the Colonel to send up his car. If we can only manage that awful road to the railroad! . . . I hope I shall never see this place again in my life."

"It is a little dull," the young woman replied, with a mischievous smile. "But don't hurry, Aunty. It's doing Nell so much good. Every time the Wild One comes she seems to shoot forward like a growing flower. He has a magic about him, that man!"

"I can't see what you and Nell find in him so unusual. He may be a good enough doctor, but he is a thorough boor. The guide has better manners!"

"It isn't manners that Nell needs just now, if she is to get really well! . . . She owes him *everything*," she added meaningfully.

"Oh, he'll be well paid for what he's done!" Mrs. Goodnow retorted with true bourgeois pride.

Miss Councillor's expressive lips curved scornfully.

"There are some things, Aunty, that can't be paid for with a check."

"He'll get more than he has ever seen in his life, I've no doubt. . . . I don't like to have Nell with him so much of the time,—especially just now when she is not quite herself. There must be something wrong about a man who buries himself in the woods like this, if he's as clever as that Dr. Savage said. Percy hinted at something about him which wasn't right — I believe he had to get out of the way!"

"You don't think that he will murder Nell!" Vera Councillor mocked.

"I don't like to have my daughter so much under the influence of a person like him," Mrs. Goodnow iterated obstinately. "One knows nothing about him, absolutely."

"Except his power," the younger woman suggested, with an ironical smile. "You don't think Nell will fall in love with him?" she asked wickedly.

"Vera!" the old lady exclaimed in horrified protest.

"You never can tell what sort of magic he may use!"

"Nell knows when a man is not a gentleman —"

"Women do fall in love with men who are not — gentlemen," Vera suggested.

"Where is he taking her this afternoon?" the mother asked uneasily.

"To some warm spring, I believe. He calls it the 'healing spring' — it is not far away."

With a yawn the young woman picked up her abandoned

novel and selected a comfortable chair. Teasing a querulous old lady offered but limited amusement to her nimble wits.

Meanwhile the bark canoe was rapidly cutting the still water of the lake, impelled by the Wild One's skilful short strokes, ending with the Indian jerk to the paddle. The doctor crouching on the tips of his moccasined feet, with a faded felt hat pulled down over his brow, the sleeves of his flannel shirt rolled up to his elbows, did not look like a "gentleman," — more like one of the half-breeds that hung about the Settlement to offer their services to rich strangers. His glance, as he paddled dumbly, rested upon the girl, who was lying before him wrapped in the folds of a rug. A small, knitted cap covered her wounded head, from which the rippling brown hair escaped and curled prettily about her temple. Her upturned face was bathed by the sunlight. She lay quite motionless, with closed eyes, as if she were passively drinking in new life from the warm golden flood. When the canoe rounded the headland and the tall firs cast shadows across her pale face, she opened her eyes and looked directly at the silent man with the paddle.

"I'm perfectly well to-day!" she said after a few moments, with a wondering accent of joy.

"That's good."

Raising herself upon one arm she dipped her hand into the ripple made by the canoe.

"It's a queer thing to be well," she murmured to herself, "to feel alive once more in this good world." She stretched her hands forth in invitation to the lake and wooded hills, the sun and the sky, and all the picture of creation spread

there before her. A smile of inner content crept over her gentle face and lighted deeper fires in the blue eyes. "All this!" she exclaimed. "I seem to see it for the first time as it really is."

"That's the human rebound," the doctor observed. "If you hadn't gone near to death, you would never have known so well what it means to live."

She drew a deep-breath.

"Now I shall always know — the darkest day — what a good thing life is!"

"I hope so," he said dully.

In the arc of the landscape as the canoe swung into the upper reach of the lake, the blue northern hills came into view. The clouds seemed pillow'd on their summits for the night, and the sun was softly filling them with golden rays. The girl looked at the hills for a little while, then as if more interested in her own small self, turned a grave face to the man and said quickly:—

"You did it for me — you gave me my life!" She nodded her little head with childlike positiveness. "In those first days afterwards, when I seemed to be sinking, sinking into some great gulf out of which I could not climb by myself, you reached down a strong arm and pulled me back, — pulled me out of the depths."

She shuddered at the thought of that black gulf, so near, so terrible! The doctor held his paddle suspended thoughtfully, and watched the drops roll down the length of the blade and drop into the lake. He shook his head.

"No doctor can do that."

"Yes," she insisted gravely. "I felt something pulling me,

taking me against my will — for I was quite ready to die then! — out of that dull horrid place, taking me up into the light!” She made a little gesture with her hand. “What was it?” she demanded, leaning forward and looking at him. “That something stronger than I was — outside of me — pulling at me, like that — calling to me — rousing me when I wanted just to sink down and sleep?”

The man’s pallid face flushed, and he replied almost roughly.

“That’s imagination!”

“But the operation,” the girl persisted; “that wasn’t imagination — it saved my life!”

“Well, — you took your chance. You *chose*,” he added more softly, “when you had the power to choose!”

“Yes, they would have waited — until it was too late.”

He nodded, muttering briefly: —

“Most would! But you took your chance — and got the reward!”

“I believed in you,” she said simply.

The man dipped the paddle more vigorously and headed the canoe for a little curving bay in the lake.

“You had faith in me — the stranger!” he muttered. “Perhaps that’s the secret of your good fortune.”

“And I was right! My faith was answered with life — dear life!” she murmured. “Is it always so?”

He smiled at her childish earnestness.

“No,” he said harshly, “far from it!”

She looked at him with puzzled eyes, as if he had roughly closed an intimate, inner door that she had opened for him, then turned away. Presently as the canoe shot closer in shore

beside a dark cliff topped with sentinel-like firs, she exclaimed, "How mysterious it is — there might be Indians under those trees ! I like this part of the lake best, — it's wilder."

"Your uncle's lumber company hasn't got its hand in here yet!"

She looked at him speculatively.

"You like wild places ! That is why you live by yourself 'way off here in the woods, at the end of the earth, as mother calls it !"

It was the first direct venture of personal exploration that she had made, and the man started a little.

"Yes, I like the woods," he said evasively.

On the girl's eager lips there hung other questions, but she contented herself with observing: —

"It must be lonely winters !"

"Winters are the best of all. Then the real life of the wilderness begins, in the deep snows !"

And he told her something of that winter life of the lakes and forest and lumber camps, of the trappers and hunters who still prowled on this frontier of the old wilderness. He pictured the solitude that was not loneliness ; the frozen mountains in all their jewelled pomp of ice and snow ; the glittering sunlit days, the starlit nights, the long, long trails on snow-shoes through forests and across lakes. His voice grew low and melodious as he spoke of the wilderness.

The girl listened with open lips, a little smile of delight on her face, as if the man made her feel the beauty of a strange, other world than that she had known, and when he paused she exclaimed with ready sympathy: —

"You must love it !" But in another moment she added,

"It must be lonely though sometimes — don't you ever want people and things?"

"No," he replied with a little smile. "I've never wanted 'people and things' since I came into the woods." And after a pause he asked, "How would you like it?",

"I don't know," she said evasively, as if troubled by some current of feeling, and presently she exclaimed, "Give me a paddle! I feel just like driving into the water!"

For answer he swung the canoe into the little cove with swifter strokes. Here a sandy beach formed a perfect arc between two rocky headlands. Above the shore, between the cliffs, was a grove of old beeches and oaks which made a close shade, and among the trees a little stream of water wandered to the sandy beach. Near the mouth of this brook the doctor drove the canoe ashore.

"This is the place I told you about — the Spring is back there."

The doctor pointed to some trees under which were the ruins of two weather-beaten log cabins.

"How lovely!" the girl exclaimed with quick enthusiasm. As they came nearer the abandoned cabins she added in a lower tone, "but so lonely — so deserted!" As she peered beneath the dark branches, her white figure shone in the sombre spot like a bit of sudden sunshine. The perfect stillness there — still even for the forest, with the peculiar stillness that comes after life has gone — fell upon them both and hushed their voices. The girl responded with feminine sensitiveness to this physical expression of the place. "It seems as though somebody had just left," she observed, looking at the gloomy cabins.

"Few people come here these days," her companion replied. "Occasionally when I am passing this cove, I see the white cloth of a tent under the trees, and sometimes the Indians camp here when they come to fish in the Lake. Or rarely they bring their sick here. They still have faith in the healing power of the Spring! . . . There are some remains of the huts they built long ago for sweat baths, — up nearer the Spring."

They lingered within the shade of the large trees and looked back at the blue water of the Lake beyond the curving beach of white sand. The doctor glancing about him in the woodsman's way found the charred remains of a camp fire and some withered tent poles, also tin cans and yellowed newspaper.

"Some white folks seem to have camped here this season," he observed. "A fishing party, or perhaps some one who wished to try the Indians' healing spring!"

He stooped and picked up a bit of white cloth from the ground.

"Surgical bandage! . . . This time it was somebody with faith in the water," he remarked with a smile, tossing away the cloth.

The massive old trees, wide-spaced, carpeted beneath with a brown mat of dead foliage, the deserted cabins, windowless and doorless, with mouldering roofs, above all the dead stillness into which their voices fell, oppressed the girl. She no longer smiled with her ready gleam of sympathy.

"It seems haunted!" she suggested, with a slight shiver. "The dead might come stealing back through the forest to the Spring. . . . Where is it?"

"Just behind here," the doctor replied, leading the way around the cabins.

There was a plainly indicated path, but it was choked with a luxuriant growth of willows and shimmering aspens and long yellow marsh grasses. The little stream trickled through the tangle, weaving its way from the Spring to the sandy shore. The doctor finally parted the rank growth of the thicket, murmuring, "There!"

She peered through the leaves and grasses. An irregular pool of greenish water lay dark against the perpendicular wall of rock, which completed the circle of the cliff about the little cove. The edges of the pool were stained with a yellow scum, and an aromatic odor of swamp growth seemed to rise from its humid depths. On a ledge of the overhanging cliff a vigorous mountain ash had rooted itself in a small pocket of soil, and drooped its branches, filled with blood-red berries, over the dark pool.

The girl gave an indifferent glance at the Spring, as if she were disappointed. But the doctor, unmindful of her mood, broke out a path to the base of the rock, and finding a gourd, filled it with the greenish water and handed it to her.

"Try the healing water!" he said with a slight smile.

She put the gourd to her lips, made a little grimace, and handed it back.

"You don't want any more medicine!" he laughed. He filled the gourd and drank slowly. "It is mildly medicinal like all these warm springs, — saline and sulphurous, — enough in it to make it disagreeable to the taste, and therefore make the sick believe it has curative

power. That belief is most of the good they get from it, however!"

He laughed thoughtfully as he drained the gourd, and then he knelt down beside the pool and gazed into its green depths, from which rose a slight mist of steam. He murmured as if he had quite forgotten his companion and were communing with himself: —

"There are many, many of these so-called 'healing springs' in every country! There's hardly a small community without its magic water. They are scattered all over this continent, — thousands and thousands of famous springs. The ancients had them, too, of course, and built temples about them. Each was provided with a special deity for guardian — some lesser god, or lovely nymph!" He glanced up at the girl with a whimsical smile, as if the thought had been suggested by her slender, girlish figure. "The Christian world took over the traditions of these places, as it stole everything it could from its pagan ancestors. The church assigned saints to be the patrons and guardians of the healing waters. You have heard of Ste. Anne, and Saint Nazaire? They are not far from here to the east. At last our modern world discovered them after its own fashion, — stripped them of their legends and their mystery, analyzed their waters, ascribed cures to them of a purely chemical nature, built baths and resorts about them, — even bottled the healing waters and sold them over the counter like everything else! To-day the miracle-working spring makes money for its proprietor."

The girl listened to his musings, doubtless little interested in the subject, but vaguely aware that his ideas were different

from those that might be expected of him,—as he was different,—and pleased that he took her with him into the intimacy of his thought.

“I suppose they are some good,” she remarked when he had finished. “Mother has tried a great many of the German waters; she thinks they help her sciatica.”

The doctor laughed ironically.

“Oh, they still work wonders! But it is the faith one brings to them rather than the chemistry of their water that is potent.”

The girl picked up a branch of the red ash berries that had fallen from the tree above and tucked a bunch of the vivid berries in her bosom.

“It is always faith!” he exclaimed, again more to himself than to the girl. “Yet there is a reason for the faith, too, more or less mystical but satisfying to the human heart. Through the water the sick return to nature. The water itself comes from within the earth, the heart of nature,—the inner source of life where all men believe instinctively lies health,—peace of body and mind. And while they take their ‘cures’ they return more or less to the simpler habits of life— they chasten their flesh!” He stooped to sweep away a bit of scum that clouded the green water. “You see, this water bubbles up warm as blood from below, from the recesses of mother earth. It isn’t very hard to believe that it has some of the primal life-giving quality of the great mother! Maybe, ‘tis so, ‘tis so!” he murmured softly.

The girl patted the red berries at her bosom approvingly, saying:—

"And there *are* things in it, so you said, — things with long Latin names?"

The man laughed, realizing how completely his thought had escaped her positive mind.

"Yes! A trace of lythia, some bicarbonate of soda, a few per cent of sulphur and magnesia, possibly some iron. . . . Such chemical forces at work in the chemical elements of human flesh — does that give the miracle?"

The girl turned her lovely face to the sky, which was blue and sunny up above the black cliff. As if phrasing her unspoken thought, the doctor remarked: —

"It makes no difference whether it's chemistry or faith, or a mixture of both! The cure's the thing, isn't it?"

"Of course! . . . Could we get up there on the ledge?"

She pointed to the little recess in the cliff where the flaming ash tree grew.

"I think so — we'll try! . . . There's an old story about that ledge."

The girl turned her little head like a listening bird.

IV

“As I said, this must have been a place of resort for the Indians for many generations. Their remains are scattered all about the cove between the cliffs. And we know they used miracle-working waters. . . . But the story! At the time when the French missionaries were first exploring this country, one of the fathers made this spring his headquarters — built his cabin on that ledge above. In the intervals of his long journeys through the wilderness he lived here beside his spring. There was a trading post at the other end of the Lake where the Settlement is now — one of those frontier posts where the Indians gathered from the woods with their winter’s gain of skins and lounged about through the warm months, fishing and quarrelling.

“This fellow — Penanguishine, they called him in their soft tongue, which means the Healer — had a great reputation among the savages as a medicine-man. One day an Indian fled to him for refuge. He was pursued by some French traders whom he had offended. One of the men at the post had taken the Indian’s woman, and he had killed him. The Frenchmen hunted the Indian around the Lake, and the fellow managed to crawl up to the ledge. The father took him into his cabin and promised to protect him from his pursuers. Then came the drunken crew from the fort and demanded their man. When the father refused to give up the Indian, they shot him where he stood in the doorway of

his hut. His body fell forwards: his blood trickled down into the warm water of the spring.

“Ever since the place has been called Sanguishine by the Indians, which means the spring of the healer — and gradually the whole Lake has got the name. . . . They believed that the spring after it received the blood of the murdered priest increased many times in healing power — but only for the Indian !”

“What a pretty story !” the girl commented.

“There are some traces of a hut upon the ledge, — enough to give a touch of possibility to the tale, if you want to believe it. . . . Let’s take a look.”

He led the way back into the thicket, around the base of the cliff, and then they scrambled up to the rocky platform not more than twenty feet square, which was completely shaded by the mountain ash and the broad branches of an old fir, lodged in a cranny of the cliff above. The doctor pointed to a rectangular ridge of mould and moss at the edge of the rock.

“We’ll call that the remains of the foundations, — moss grown and decayed now, mere earth.”

Kicking at the mould with his heel, he revealed a splinter of an old log.

“Somebody has lived here, at any rate, and not so many hundreds of years ago ! . . . It’s a fine perch for a hermit, isn’t it ?”

“I suppose the father came here to be alone, — to pray and to think,” the girl mused sentimentally.

“Or to be safe from the wolves !” the doctor suggested with one of those quick turns that seemed to characterize his

thought. "Possibly he took advantage of the reputation the Spring had among the superstitious Indians to gain power over them. There's always something of the fakir in every successful man. He must be ready to use all the accidents for all they are worth," he mocked. . . . "And however that may be, the story is a good deal like some of the legends of the saints and the ancient myths; which only shows that the human heart always craves some mystery, and makes up stories like these to satisfy that inner desire for miracle. We must have our fable. . . . Covering thus with illusions great truths," he murmured.

The girl leaned against the ash tree under the blood-red fruit. The ledge was sufficiently elevated to give a clear view over the tops of the trees in the little glade out to the blue water of the Lake. The brooding silence of the autumn day fell upon the place, with its tender suggestions of the changing season. The girl watched the man through her drooping eyelids. She had not comprehended all that he had been saying, yet she listened sympathetically, as she did usually when men talked to her about themselves and their thoughts. She felt pleased that he cared to talk to her, and somehow without a personal word having been exchanged between them their intimacy had grown perceptibly since they had reached the old Healing Spring. . . .

"Well," the doctor remarked, as he dropped a bunch of red berries into the pool beneath, "the last healer who pitched camp here was a patent medicine fellow. He sold liquor and drugs to the half-breeds until the government got after him. He went away in a steam launch to jail!"

"It's such a lovely spot!" the girl murmured.

The doctor paced off the distance from the ridge of mould to the edge of the cliff.

"At least it's possible," he pronounced. "A man's body if it fell straight forwards might drop blood into the Spring!"

"I can see him lying there!" the girl exclaimed, peering over into the green pool.

"It is a rare place for any healer," the doctor mused, standing with crossed arms and gazing before him over the still tops of the trees. "He could make a camp down there by the shore and gather his sick about him. They could bathe in the warm water of the Spring and lie under the trees and let nature do her best for them. . . . The miracle might come back, who knows? . . . If he were a real healer, no fakir! . . . And the sick would come to him here in the wilderness from the ends of the earth."

The girl looked at him as if she were trying to resolve whether he were in earnest or merely indulging a playful fancy. For the moment he seemed to have utterly forgotten her presence and to be talking to himself out of his inmost heart. His face, which was so often sardonic or ironical, had become stern, and his eyes seemed fixed on a distant point. His long, roughly clothed figure was erect. He reached a hand above the Spring, as he muttered unconsciously, "If he were a healer!"

The girl, somewhat awed by his manner, asked timidly: —

"Would you like to live here and take care of sick people?"

"I!" he exclaimed with swift irony. "I!" and then more gently, "It is a fancy I have sometimes, — just a dream, — a dream!"

She smiled. Women like to listen to the secret dreams of men.

V

As the sun withdrew behind the hill, the chill of an autumnal evening crept over the little grove about the Healing Spring. The white mist rose more thickly from the pool, and a sulphurous odor permeated the air. The girl pointed up to the summit of the cliff, where the sun still lingered, and said: —

“Take me up there !”

After some scrambling over the rocky ledges they reached the southern headland of the hill, at the end of the cove, where the sun still fell. The Lake lay translucent a hundred feet and more beneath the granite shelf. The fir wood reached thick and close almost to the edge of the cliff.

“What a place for a camp !” the girl cried, as she stepped cautiously forward and looked down to the Lake. Color had flooded back to her face. The pensive mood which had come over her at the Spring had given way to her natural lightness of spirit. She breathed in the sunny air, odorous with balsam, with sensuous satisfaction.

“Perhaps some day,” her companion replied, “I’ll build me a cabin here and settle down beside the old Spring !”

“You won’t live here in the woods always,” she said quickly.

“Why not? I came from the edge of the wilderness —

down below there, a few miles. I lived there with my father until he sent me away to be educated," he explained.

She waited for further revelations, but the man became silent. He was looking out northwards over the billowy forests to the blue summits of a low mountain range that rose smoothly, forest covered, towards one dominating peak, lording the land solitarily.

"They call that mountain Macatawa, — father of lakes," he explained. "On the further side of it begins the unbroken wilderness."

Out of the silence came the thud of oars against wooden rowlocks, and presently a heavy boat pushed into sight just beneath them. It was filled with workmen and camp outfit.

"There is the worm on its way into the forest, — the first crew sent out to make camp higher up for the winter's cut. When the snow begins to fly, the worm will be eating its way up the slopes of old Macatawa!"

A little cloud of purple and rose and fine gold was floating above the summit of the mountain, which unmindful of its fate rose on the western horizon like the image of tranquil eternity. All the intervening valley of undulating tree-tops was slowly filling with the evening haze.

The girl, responsive to beauty, nature, physical life, murmured softly: —

"Too bad they should spoil this!" and with a merry chuckle she added, "Uncle must be the head of your forest worm! Colonel Blake is president of the company, you know — and that's why we came to the Lake!"

"Yes!" he said shortly.

"Uncle says it will open up the country — develop it."

"Development!" he growled scornfully. "Do you know what that means? First a lot of drunken lumber jacks, then a Settlement like ours, — disease and worse, too."

"It has to come, I suppose, before there can be civilization."

She was amusing herself by tossing pebbles to the Lake below and watching them disappear, without a sound, into the dark water. Her delicate face and fine clothes symbolized that state of mankind called civilization. The doctor with his keen eyes fixed appreciatively upon her muttered his protest.

"Change and more change, always — the Indian, the trader, the freeman of the forest, then the lumber jack, the tourist, and so on! Superstition, then Faith, then Science, then — nothing! Myths, then poetry, then — business! The healer at his spring, the priest, then the fakir!"

As if these abstract matters were of small importance, the girl flashed a direct question at the man.

"Why did you come back to the wilderness?"

His face became instantly sombre, and he did not answer. Again she said, softly insistent, "Tell me why!"

In the still, brooding moments of the dying day a spirit seemed to rise between them, troubling both. The simple relation of doctor and patient had gone forever, and suddenly something else had taken its place, — the stormy mystery of man and woman! Before the burning glance of the man's eyes, the girl's face fell, but she repeated softly, "Tell me, my Healer!"

"Let me be," he replied evasively, "just that — your Healer — the Wild One, as your friend calls me!"

But the girl, now strangely woman at heart, refused all subterfuge. "No!" she said compellingly.

And then, yielding to the woman-charm she cast, he began to tell her of himself, — his boyhood in the frontier settlement, — a mere pocket in the wilderness. His father was trader and doctor, rough surgeon too, with ambitions for his son. At eighteen the lad was sent away to get his education in his father's profession. Laboriously, under all the disadvantages of poverty and ignorance, he had slowly acquired his training, in college, medical school, hospital, — even got abroad for a time.

"I was determined to become a great surgeon, like the famous men who taught me. The trader's son, out of the wilderness, I thought to become renowned, — sought for, highly paid."

The girl nodded appreciatively. It was the sort of tale of ambitious youth that she could readily comprehend.

"That is why you knew how to help me!"

"And had by me, ready for use, the tools of my trade."

"But why did you give up then — after all you had done?"

The doctor's brows contracted.

"First because I found out that medicine was a trade, — just a trade for making money out of people."

In answer to her puzzled look he explained as clearly as he could the modern system of healing in the schools, the hospitals, and in private practice, — the pretence and charlatany of it, the enormous fees charged, the trickery of the trade.

"I was sick of it all," he said, "and no longer wanted to hang out my sign."

At this time, in the revolt of his impulsive, obstinate youth against the commercial methods of healing that he saw in operation on all sides, he became terribly infected in the hospital, and for more than a year was dangerously ill. The poison, running through his system, sucked his life, numbing his brain.

The girl uttered a little cry of pity.

"It left me on my knees, weak and penniless," he said; "but that was not the worst!"

And he told her fearlessly the darkest part of his story, — how he had yielded like so many other doctors to the temptation of the dangerous drugs he was familiar with, and had gradually sunk into the muck of human degradation, until the year before, at the bottom of his abyss, he had found the courage to flee back to the wilderness, there to fight his enemies alone, in silence.

"And that is all," he ended dully.

"No," she said simply. "Now you are well — you have won!"

As if she were thinking that no man could do for her what this one had done unless he had first conquered himself. He waited for several moments, then replied, "Not yet!"

The words dropped dully from between his teeth. The girl looked at him blankly, uncomprehendingly. She had heard of vice, — a far-off thing, a kind of male disease that wrecked families.

"I have not yet won," he repeated, "not cured myself!"

"But you have done good to the people up here," she protested. "Dr. Percy and the guide told us —"

"That is a matter of a few medicines, a little skill — the

old sleight of hand. It means nothing. . . . No, my life is failure, failure, thus far."

"Don't say that!" she pleaded softly.

"Ambition gone, the power, the will to cure. And so I have crawled back to my old home in the woods."

He laughed ironically, disagreeably. His laughter expressed the waste of will, the days of fruitless struggle, the warfare never ending, never fulfilling in victory. Suddenly he exclaimed, "Once — once only — it came back, — the power!"

"When?"

"When I dared take your life in my hands," he replied slowly. "I would not have ventured that, if you had not dared for me! But you willed it — you! You called me back into the room, you remember. . . . So you gave me the power and the will!"

The girl remained silent before the mystery.

"And while you needed me all was well — the power was mine. . . . You cannot understand now. Some day when you are full woman, you may remember and understand. . . . You gave more than you received."

"But you were strong," she said wonderingly. "You took me in your strong arms, and dragged me out of the gulf into which I was slipping, up, up into the light, into life — this!"

She would not renounce her man of power in face of his confession of weakness.

"You gave it all to me," he repeated. "You put yourself into my hands — you willed for me — you trusted — you dared!"

It was a litany of love and adoration. The woman smiled with dreamy eyes. The passionate words made her large to herself, powerful over this man — her Healer !

“I fought for your life,” he said, “as I never fought for anything in this world.”

“You won it !”

“We won !” His voice rang triumphantly for the first time. “We took you from what might have been worse than death itself.”

She looked at him appealingly, as if she would be saved from the spirit that hovered between them, the spirit of victory in him, of yielding in her.

“Now you will go on,” she said evasively, “and do more — more than you ever dreamed of !”

“The night comes,” he replied heavily. . . .

She rose and faced the mountains, a little smile of happiness on her lips. She laid a gentle hand on his arm, timidly, as if to say, “All will be well, my Healer, with you and with me !” His burning eyes brought vivid color to her face.

“You live over there ?” she questioned, pointing to the slope of the mountain.

“Yes, in the Valley of the Seven Lakes.”

“You will take me there !”

“No, never !”

“Why not ?”

“It is an evil place,” he muttered, “unfit for you.”

“You will take me there some day !” she urged.

“Never !”

And then the spirit seemed to be speaking through the man’s lips. “Because I love you ! . . . love you, too much !”

In her heart she had known that this would be so, even from the first when she had looked into his eyes and asked for life from him. She knew that it would happen so to her in this strange September day with the sweet sunlight and the scent of earth and tree, the mirror of the blue lake beneath, the dark glade about the Healing Spring with its old memories of pain and human suffering — she had always known it would be like this. Here in the silence of the wilderness her lover would come to her and whisper the words, "Because I love you!"

It was not the voice of the man, but the voice of the spirit breathing through him, — the spirit of the air, of life, of all things uttering itself through those white set lips, shining in the smouldering eyes of this one, so near, so strange! Other lovers had spoken at her unwilling ear, and she had turned away.

"Hush!" she said to him, her hand upon his arm, as though fearing something that came towards them in the twilight from afar off.

Motionless they stood there in the gathering night, looking out into the vague wilderness, up to the tip of the mountain where rested the little cloud, rose and purple and fine gold.

VI

ONCE more Miss Councillor took up her observing pen, and after preluding in a satiric vein, continued as follows:—

“‘Uncle Stanny’ popped in late yesterday afternoon. As soon as the steamer docked, he whisked up here in his private car, which awaits us at Beaver Falls, only forty miles away. Aunty has revived. The thought of the comfortable ‘Pilgrim’ scarcely a day’s journey away fills her with renewed confidence in life. She is for breaking away at once, but the Colonel, now that he is here, has business of the lumber company to attend to. So Aunty must still her urban passion for a few days longer.

“Even I am restless, for the first time, now that the city wheels are in active motion. In spite of all this glorious October sunshine, with the Lake a mad blue delight, and the trees about its edge all flaming in color, I want to run. Nature alone, like yourself all to yourself, becomes a little fearsome: a kind of awesome thing creeps over the wilderness nights, like — raw tragedy. . . . Oh, I just haven’t enough to do except think. The nurses have taken all my small duties — I have lost my importance. Aunty reads novels and fusses with the little Jap. The doctor, who is about most of the days, has eyes and words only for his patient. Not one for me ! You know, Gerald dear, I am a companionable sort ; I simply can’t read all night and

make eyes at the Lake all day. I caught myself regretting Dr. Percy's departure. Fancy !

"And Nell ? When she isn't resting quite by herself, according to orders, she is off somewhere with her Healer. The Wild Man of the woods has become complete dictator of the camp. How Aunty hates him ! Ever since that day, now almost twelve weeks ago, when Nell put herself in his hands, he has never let go his hold. Those fearful first weeks after the operation, when Nell seemed to go down into a black gulf of weakness and despair, he was really quite wonderful. He appeared to have absolute confidence in himself, while we held our breaths over our poor wounded girl, with that frightful gash in her head. (I shudder even now as I write about it.) But the Wild Man knew ! Conceit, Aunty called it ; divination, rather. While we quaked he went about his task, as if he had the matter all arranged with God. . . . So he pulled her out. It was magnificent to see him drag her back from that awful fate. Each time he came he seemed to touch an inner spring in the girl, and she responded with a new sign of control, of health.

"When Nell began to be like herself once more, to laugh and make little jokes, — playfully to disobey orders, — he became tyrant man pure and simple. He threatened to take her and the nurses to some spot farther up the Lake and have them live in a tent there until the cure was complete. That finished Aunty ! Yesterday they were gone for a long time exploring some place called the 'Healing Spring.' It was dark when they came back, and Aunty, emboldened by the Colonel's presence, said something before the Wild One about 'prudence' and 'propriety.' Nell was much dis-

tressed ; 'Oh, please, mother, don't !' and Aunty submitted gloweringly. But some day she and the Wild One must have it out, and Aunty, as you know, can be nasty.

"I think she has some reason now for her feeling of antagonism. This man has laid a kind of spell upon our light-hearted Nell. She is extraordinarily different since her illness in many little ways, — older of course. Much of the time she seems quite remote. You remember how *gamine* she was ? Now she is serious. It is as if she were living in a world just a little outside ours, never wholly here except perhaps when he is with her. When she came in last night she barely noticed the Colonel, and moved as if she were still in a fascinating dream. Do you suppose that he could have done something to her, when he had her mind, her very soul, in his touch ? hypnotism? — no, that vulgar explanation would not account for it !

"Love, then ? If that is the answer, then love does re-create ! And certainly the effect of Nell upon him is most extraordinary, too. She has made him over quite. He is no longer the mere boor. Even outwardly he has got a kind of dignity, carries himself erectly, as if sure of himself. And his face, when he looks at her, is illumined, like the face of an adoring warrior in an Italian altar piece, or like the face of one who in the morning sees the light of hope after a night of black despair. He worships her, that is plain enough. Worships our pampered little Nell with her sweet tooth for all the pleasant luxuries of life, — a flirting, breezy, yes, quite unpoetic, young woman ! If he loves her, 'tis the love we women dream of and never find, — worship, adoration, reverence, — not desire ! Love of that temper makes

us women feel our power over the brute in you men, — first and last time !

“Perhaps I am letting my imagination go too far. It is probably nothing more than a case of doctor and patient, — the triumph of skill and the joy of health. At least it has not gone beyond look and tone of voice, — an alphabet that only a woman can read properly. Nature teaches *us*. I doubt if they themselves know whereto they are swimming in the remote ether in which they live.

“If he should aspire to the daughter of John Graham Goodnow, formerly president of the Merchants and Miners National Bank, etc., he is in for some shocks. For example, the ether was rudely disturbed this morning when Uncle Stanny remarked genially to Nell: —

“‘You were in great luck, Nell, that your backwoods doctor hadn’t a jag when he cut into your topknot.’

“The Colonel’s language is brutally expressive, you know.

“Nell flushed and turned away in contemptuous silence. The Colonel continued, ‘Well, any way he’s done a good job by you, little girl, and we’ll see that he’s paid for it, — give him enough for a year’s spree !’

“Then there was more talk of the fee by both Aunty and the Colonel. Aunty and the Colonel are rather vulgar about money matters. Aunty said she should wait until the doctor sent in his bill, and if it was ‘unreasonable,’ should send him back a check for five hundred dollars. ‘Make it a thousand,’ the Colonel said; ‘it would have cost you five times that in the city !’ It developed later that Nell has some romantic notion of her own, wishes to present him with a tract of this forest to include that Healing Spring he is so

fond of, and the northern end of the Lake up to the mountains, — a kingdom ! It belongs to the lumber company, I believe, and they are planning to cut there this winter. The Colonel laughed at her, said she might have the Spring and a hundred acres about it, 'enough for a doctor who lives like a lumber jack in a log cabin.' 'You can take it from my money,' she said loftily. 'Your mother's money,' the Colonel corrected. These Goodnows are so excessively *bourgeois!* . . .

"A great expedition is on foot, — the final flourish to our adventure. The Colonel has arranged it. We are to climb Macatawa and camp at Elk Lake on the shoulder of the mountain, where the choppers are at work. I suppose the Wild One will be with us, though there is no love lost between him and the Colonel, whom I gather he regards as the arch fiend of civilization invading his wilderness. *A bientot*, V. C."

VII

THE last of the golden autumn days had come. About the still waters of Lake Sanguishine the flaming trees had faded to dull russets and yellows, and were now dying in ashes. By day Macatawa was clothed in a royal purple, and the morning of "the great expedition" a glittering mantle of white covered its summit. Vera Councillor, assisting in the careful lading of the canoes that were to take the little party up the Lake, pointed to the hoary tip.

"First notice of winter!" she called cheerily to Mrs. Goodnow.

"Yes — and time we were out of the woods. We'll be snowed in next!"

She had pleasant visions of the Colonel's private car, with its steam heat, its plush and nickel accessories of civilization.

"Dr. Holden says that the winters are glorious," Vera threw out mischievously, as she deftly packed caviare and candy into the corners of the great hamper.

"Humph!" Mrs. Goodnow commented, with a little shiver. "He's welcome to his snow and ice."

"Nell seems to think she might like to try a winter in the woods."

"Nell!"

There were many mixed emotions compressed in that one word, — chiefly suspicion. "Vera, do you think —"

But she could not phrase the preposterous idea.

“What is the use of thinking, Aunty?” the young woman remarked soothingly, but a sly smile crossed her face as she bent to her task again.

“Is he going with you?” Mrs. Goodnow demanded. “The Colonel didn’t ask him.”

“Nell did! He said that he might join us at Elk Lake — he has a patient or something to attend to first.”

“We shall start the day after you return,” was all the reply that Mrs. Goodnow made.

The young woman’s smile deepened.

For the moment the good lady’s housekeeping instinct overcame all others, and bustling about the huge hamper and ordering her servants to fetch this and that she completed the elaborate preparations for the two days’ trip. Presently the Colonel came with the guide to get his precious hamper. Round and rosy and altogether carnal, he lifted the bag of bottles tenderly as one might a child.

“You didn’t forget my cigars, Vera? . . . Where is Nell?” he called back. “It’s time we were off!”

And at last Nell appeared, having delayed the start a full hour, — fresh from sleep and bath, humming an air, with dancing eyes. Even the fat Colonel, fuming in the midst of his multitudinous comforts, glanced approvingly at the girl.

“Better than ever!” he exclaimed.

“How happy she seems!” Vera murmured to the mother.

“Yes,” was the grudging admission.

There was in the girl an unseen fount of joy. Each of the onlookers could recognize the fact, feel the radiating warmth

of her bubbling presence, but was puzzled to account for it fully. She tossed her mother a kiss, flitted lightly down the long steps to the landing, and disposed of the party so that she and Vera might have a canoe to themselves, while the Colonel and the guides struggled behind with the bulky apparatus of comfort. She swept her paddle in long light strokes, shooting the canoe deftly forward.

“What a day of days to be alive in!” she sang.

Her companion, following her swift stroke somewhat stolidly, asked:—

“When do you expect him to join us?”

“Who?” the girl inquired demurely.

“Oh, Nellie — Nellie!” her friend retorted.

This young woman with the keen eyes and the intelligent smile was already savoring a possible drama of sex, — some small part of which she might witness up there in the woods.

But when the party reached the shoulder of the mountain where in a dimple of the folding hills a little lake lay like a bowl of pellucid water, there was no one to greet them but the squirrels, who were finishing their harvest. While the Colonel went after game with one of the guides, the other man helped the two young women make ready the rough shanty for the night. If the girl was disappointed at not finding her Wild One there, she made no sign, but with the same joyous note in her voice prepared the bough beds, and later toward evening climbed to the top of the mountain. Looking out into the northern waste of forest, she remarked merely, “There’s nothing beyond!” and turned her back to gaze down on Sanguishine, — a distant black spot beneath them. Her face became pensive. But neither then nor

later about the evening camp-fire could the teasing Vera elicit a betraying spark of emotion. If the girl dallied with love, she already had learned the woman's lesson of concealment. The name of the doctor did not cross her lips, nor was his absence apparently noted.

While the Colonel in well-stuffed comfort lounged before the great fire that was pouring a feathery stream of smoke into the starlit sky, the young women made ready for the night, chattering womanwise of all the irrelevant nothings that come to feminine lips at this hour. The last thing Vera remembered was the outline of a girlish figure in the cabin doorway. Nell was observing the crystal night. Something very like a sigh reached her ears. Once in the early glimmer of dawn Vera opened her eyes and was conscious of some one moving about in the dim light of the little cabin, but she soon relapsed into deep slumber.

Yet much happened in that cold gray dawn, while the Colonel was placidly snoring under his mountainous load of blankets, and Vera, tucked beneath her furs, was dreaming contentedly. . . .

What was it made the girl restless before dawn? When she stole to the door she saw in the misty uncertain light the figure of a man leaning over the dying camp-fire, nursing it assiduously into flame. For a few moments she watched the solitary figure crouched silently by the fire, and then crept to him over the thick brown needles. The Wild One looked up from his task, and in the ruddy light his face seemed to her white, haggard. His hands trembled with the chips they held. She divined a stress of mind that

she would assuage if she could. But she said nothing. For a time they crouched together over the fire while the gray mist of the dawn enveloped the tall trees, the little lake, — all the world.

He had been delayed, he told her at last, but that was not all. He had been tortured by doubt whether he should come, whether they two should sip further of that fiery draught that was brewing for them. He looked at her with miserable eyes of longing and struggle — she was so fair, so slight, so tender ! She did not understand this man's contest with himself to put aside the desire of his heart. To her life was simple. . . .

As the uncertain light gained upon the enveloping mist, he rose and motioned her to follow him into the wood. They circled the little lake, stepping from stone to stone along its rocky shore. When they were on the other side of the water from the camp, he stopped. The bowl of the lake was completely covered by the mist. There was the silence of vast space about them. The shivering girl drew her blanket round her more closely, waiting, her heart beating strangely. Suddenly out of the gray mist came the head of a deer ; it bent and drank in the lake ; then another came, and another. Out of the stillness a great bird rose and whirred aloft. Here in the chill gray dawn the two watching by the lake seemed part of the elemental life of the wilderness. . . . The deer drank and departed. The vaporous atmosphere became more diffused. Suddenly up out of the east a crimson band shot through the mist, then another, and more slowly others.

It was the dawn !

The man with folded arms stood watching the gathering

colors. The girl by his side breathed swiftly. In the silence unbroken between them she might read his heart. The dawn was hope, life — coming onwards, flooding full.

“How fast it comes !” she murmured.

It was crimson now, soon crossed with purple and azure, — splendidly royal ! Beneath the light the man’s haggard face filled with blood, and his eyes burned. At the moment, with common impulse, they turned to each other, she looking up into his face, he taking her in his arms, kissing her lips, there in the dawn.

She seemed to understand in the light of this dawn a thousand things unknown before, — her uncertain heart, the being of man, joy, hope, the wonder of living and struggling, — the purpose of life. . . . It was their dawn, sent to light their life always, — the dawn of hope, the dawn of power for him, the dawn of love for her. Her face lay still upon his breast. . . .

Vera Councillor, yawningly awake at last in the cold air of the morning, looked at the smiling lips of the girl, felt the soft light in her eyes.

“She loves !” the woman said to herself instantly, with a strange pang of envy.

The guides were busy about the camp-fire with breakfast, and the Colonel came waddling from his dip in the lake, puffing mightily. Not for them the wonder of that red, red dawn over the forest and the mountain, in the heart of man and woman !

VIII

He wrote her: "I am laying the foundation of our home, stone upon stone, there where we stood on the rocky ledge above the lake beyond the Healing Spring — a house of stone built upon stone." Thus he wrote her as the December winds began to blow frostily. And she, reading his words propped luxuriously in her chair upon the deck of the Nile steamer, felt her face suffuse with a sudden flush of color. Dreamily she let the letter fall into her lap and with eyes fixed upon the waste of Egyptian sand saw the gaunt figure of a man, bent, his hands clasped about heavy stones, — slivers of the granite ledges, building far off in the austere wilderness a house of stone — for *her*!

The audacity of that announcement, the fervor of those passionless words, — "stone upon stone" — for eternity! Lapped in her comfort she had a sensuous joy in this picture of the gaunt man building his habitation, — hers, too, he said, — and her woman's heart thrilled with pride because *she* had set in motion those footsteps from afar — the unappeased desire of her had done it, and the will to mould that lay dormant in her.

She remembered well the spot, that sunny headland rimmed with firs above the blue lake, where first the spirit had spoken between them. How well she knew the steps that led to it, — the sandy rim of beach, the dark glade with its deserted

cabins, the green pool of steaming water, the hermit's rock, and above all the rock shelf open to the mountains and the lake. Out of the dark place of old sickness and healing *her* Healer had led the way up the steep path to the rocky platform and there at the very spot where her feet had stood he was building his tabernacle of love. In her heart was a woman's sweet triumph in the force of this worship. . . .

His kiss still burned upon her lips, and she saw him as they had parted at the dawn before the flaming colors of the eastern sky, upon the mountain. The dawn that was to be for them both the beginning of life, the realization of unknown wonders! He had left her in the beauty of that dawn, disappeared into the wilderness, and she had not looked for him on the morrow when they had departed. That gray November morning, with the first chill snowflakes in the air, she did not expect him then. Something had told her that he would not come again until he was full master of himself, ready to take her up to the heights with him. So she had smiled when her mother grumbled at his "lack of breeding," and the Colonel made his rough jokes, and Vera examined her furtively. As the boat put out for the Settlement she had looked back to the headland above the Healing Spring. Was it the lonely figure of a man she saw there, standing motionless among the firs? . . . Her kiss was on his lips — she left him that gage. Now she waited.

Other letters continued the sweet story, linking her close during all her wandering to the little stone house, from its foundation course to the pitch of its roof timber. It lay east by west, one face to the northern breast of hills — just as she had stood that time — the other open to the sun,

which would fall softly across the encircling firs. There was a sheltered spot beyond the house for a flower garden, did she remember? A tiny place, rock-ribbed, for which the earth must be brought.

There were many gusty, gloomy days, — a bitter December, during which the stone walls rose slowly, — now a hearty stroke of work, then a slackening of effort, as if the building kept pace with a restless will. The sills and traverses, all of old weathered oak, were got to their place with much difficulty. Then there were notes of a great fireplace, a solid breast of rock completely filling one end of the main room, from whose cavernous depths the house must be warmed. Also a broad oak door, low so that a man must bend his head on entering, but hospitably wide, — this she learned at Khartoum beside the golf course.

Again he wrote of interruptions in the work, days when no stone was put in its place, no beam raised. But these delays were of a professional nature. "There is much sickness among the lumber camps—they send for me often." After this a long silence until the girl, travelling hither and thither, became uneasy, feared the loss of letters gone astray on her whirling path, — or worse! At last, — she had reached the smiling slopes of Sicily, — a letter with the bold Sanguishine postmark made her heart leap. There had been an attack of smallpox in one of the upper camps, and her lover had been isolated, — could not send even a letter. But now it was over — a number of deaths, poor devils! — and he was back once more at the stone house, reckoning this time to complete it without interruption. . . . Now there came for him in the midst of the deep snows a

space of sunny stillness and calm. The building went fast, — the walls were up level and ready for the roof beams. . . . Sitting in the languorous Sicilian garden, heavy with sweet scents and droning bees, she pictured the Wild One clothed in his rough sheepskin, with the thick woollen leggings of the lumbermen pulled over his moccasins, and heavy hide gloves on his hands. She saw him ferreting out the stones and bits of timber from their snowy bed, placing them carefully piece by piece firm in the walls of the stone house. The girl's heart beat strangely. . . .

And then a week's puzzling silence. The building had tarried, for no expressed reason. He wrote feverishly of terrible cold, of frosty nights and glittering stars in a black heaven. He had returned to that lonely cabin in the distant valley, — the place he would never take her to see; she divined that old enemies have been on his trail, like hungry wolves, hunting him down in his loneliness and longing. Her heart cries out to be with him; nevertheless her woman's sense fast growing tells her that these enemies on his trail he must fight off single-handed if he would emerge triumphant, — her Healer! It was for that he had stayed in the wilderness — to best those devouring wolves within him. He will fight them down, — lassitudes, appetites, slackening will — all!

As if in response to her faith, once more rose triumphant the song of the stone house, — *their* house, he calls it, — and she smiles. He has returned to the Healing Spring, taking with him old Gray Jack, his servant, — a cast-off army cook, rover, drunken child of the wilderness whom he has saved from a miserable grave. They have established themselves in one

of the old cabins half buried under the winter's snowbank, — he will not return to the dark valley, where he has been eaten by the wolves, but will camp near the stone house. And the song of the house rises triumphantly again.

Dimly it appears to her woman's heart that this Wild One of hers is building into those stone walls not merely their love: he is building up his will, his manhood, — purpose, the hope blazoned in that last dawn upon the mountains. She cannot fully understand what it means, bewildered as she is by the social flutter of her wandering life, confusing voices all about, possible lovers, idlers, Vera's young diplomat, who has latterly appeared, her mother, all the complex triviality of her leisured life. She cannot wholly comprehend this fury of spiritual struggle afar off there in the grim north, in the forest choked with snow, this strong man's fight with tense muscle for something beyond his grasp, for possession, not of her, but of himself.

“The stones are set in blood,” he said once darkly, “and light streams on it from a crimson sky!” an illusion she suspects to the wolves on his track or perhaps to the dawn when they came together. It is a pretty fancy, and her cheeks flame at the thought of the worship in it. Did ever woman have lover like that? Alone that night in her chamber she looked out upon the Sicilian hill dotted with little gray stone houses, and wondered if *theirs* was to be like them. No — more spacious, rising amply from the rocky platform among the firs, the proud home of her lord! She slept with a smile upon her pretty lips at the thought, and in the morning, when the flower girl came singing down the sunlit street, she wrote to him: —

"I am so eager to see your stone house, — can't you send me a little picture of it?"

As if he had not sent her many a glowing picture of the temple he was building for her! The reply came to her in Rome, whither the party, now swollen to unmanageable confusion, had drifted. "Look in your heart, my beloved," he wrote with a tone of faint disappointment, "and there you must find the living picture of it all." How could she study her heart, with all the scurrying to and fro in motors, the endless chatter of drawing-rooms, the procession of faces expecting something from her? She did not answer. Then a luminous moment came to her, in the silence of an empty old temple. He was building his will, himself for her, making the temple of his purpose clean and large, fit for her, his heart of hearts to lie safely within. She knelt there and listened, in the empty temple, with a prayer struggling upwards in her heart. Afterwards for a little time she drew apart from the others, refused excursions, snubbed the dangling young men.

"Romantic mood," Vera Councillor dubbed it, having noted the thick letters with the black Sanguishine post mark. She had her own dallying with fate these days, being discretely courted by a young diplomat, good to look at, urbane of manner, with an experienced air, an important eye-glass. She talked profoundly of the Balkan situation, also of political prospects in the home country, all of which rendered Mrs. Goodnow jealous. The Councillors had more money than the Goodnows, she admitted, but Vera was inferior to her own Nell in woman's chiefest weapon. Why not her daughter, with a courting diplomat? She spoke to the

girl bluntly, but got little satisfaction. Yet the temple mood wore off presently, as it must with the young, and the girl went riding over the campagna with one Bertie Scales, who had passed the maternal scrutiny.

Thus the winter of wandering slipped away, in Italian haunts, along the Riviera, and April found the party at Aix to be rested and cured of their ailments. Here the usual thick letter was waiting her, — the one she thrust into her bosom secretively and read alone, quite alone, in her chamber.

The house of stone, now roofed in, covered with a mantle of snow, was slowly nearing completion. Her special room, — the chamber to the east at the edge of the rock, — was now the subject. There had been heavy snows, and more sickness in the wilderness. He was forced to make long journeys, an entire day over the ice in a sleigh, or ten miles on stout snow-shoes, to look after some woodsman tossing in fever in a squalid bunk house. Some of these patients needed more attention than he could give them in their lonely cabins. He spoke of bringing them to the Spring, when they were strong enough to be moved. Old Gray Jack would help him look after them, and the deserted cabins could be made comfortable enough. She might see the pushing forward of an idea in his mind, — the one he had mentioned to her when they stood about the Spring, — a plan of gathering his rough patients about him where he could give them more attention, somewhat better quarters, bring them back more surely to health.

There were traces of pride over his labors in the letters, — the creator's triumph in the work of his hand. "They will make me go, get me out at all hours. . . . I have been

forced to send for more medical supplies. You will find a busy hospital beneath your home!" No, not that, she said thoughtfully. He should not waste himself on a few half savage lumber jacks, sewing up cuts, medicining fevers and the like, common task of ordinary men. Yet she was prouder of her lover's gift than Vera of her diplomat's subtle analysis of the Balkan situation. Her hero had found himself, she thought, and she saw him swiftly emerging from the forest, his fame quickly radiating over great cities, across the seas.

"I've pitched my tepee in the shelter of the stone house," he wrote, "where the garden will be some day. It was lonelier down below in the cabin with Gray Jack."

He would not enter *their* house before the day! That day when they two would bow their heads beneath the low lintel and enter it together. The girl's still eyes grew misty. She spoke to her mother of their return, — "not wishing always to be wandering about Europe," — and the difficult old woman acquiesced, secretly pining for her own suburban ease. The date was set for the sailing, and she wrote it to him. . . .

"He is lonely," she said to herself, with a yearning that made her restless. She saw him bound in his little tent through the smothering week-long storms, prey to the furies that had gnawed him. She saw him pale and gaunt, and she felt within herself the soothing power, the touch of balm. At this point she essayed to put into halting words something of the vague emotions that throbbed in her.

"I can see the great frozen woods," she wrote, "the sunlight on the snow, and the drifting storms, and you on your way to the sick through them. It is good to think that you

are wanted, can help people. Do they realize what a wonderful doctor they have? But it is too lonely — it makes me sad to think of you in that loneliness and your great gift so thrown away as it must be up there!"

Back came the reply, with unexpected despatch, as though two mighty sea-monsters had conspired to exchange the thoughts of these lovers.

"Lonely!" He repudiated the accusation with the ring of victory. "The wilderness all about me is peopled,—with you! How could it be lonely?"

A smile rose unconsciously to her lips, and her breath fluttered, as if a strong man had her in his grasp and was bearing her aloft in his uplifting sweep. "My days are full of effort, my nights are full of dream of you!" Ah, the lover! "The darker moments pass if I but think of you. You have conquered! . . . The house is nearly ready for its mistress. And I, too, am ready. . . . Yes, I shall go once, but once only, to the city."

Which being interpreted as the girl could interpret it, meant that the long winter's trial was finished: a man was made as well as a house of stone, the dark bondage broken, his will built solid like the walls of rock, and now his heart rioted to claim its reward. But what was that casual reference "once and but once only to the city"?

The girl's face grew serious as she read on in the murky light of the London hotel.

"Don't say that these people are not worthy of my gift. They are flesh and blood, and from the city hospital to the comfortable homes of Suburbia humanity is the same — under the knife, on the bed of sickness."

She did not give much heed to this extravagant statement, her attention being caught by what followed:—

“It is almost the end of our long winter, — the last clear, glittering days of snow. Already the sun is too high, stays up too long to make good footing for the trail. The sun has swung southwards until it floods the broad doorway of the house at noon. To-day the air is positively soft, with southerly whisperings, such as you must be breathing. Soon the streams will begin to trickle beneath the snows. Spring sweeps up here at a bound. So, just these few days of waiting, brooding before the spring, as I wait for you! . . . You will find some sad changes. They have cut great gashes on the flanks of Macatawa, — ghastly wounds, — and from them the blood of the forest has been drained to make print paper for the millions. But the forest will grow again some day, and they cannot butcher about the Healing Spring, nor here around the stone house. It waits for its mistress. Come!”

Was ever lover more imperious? She saw his bold purpose, and as she came to the end of the letter it made her grave. For a long time she sat motionless, thinking, trying to envisage the dark future, — their future.

Hitherto it had all been in the cloudland of romance and worship. His words had thrilled her. What stirred most was the sense of his worship, of being so much to one so powerful, her great Healer, as she felt him to be. She did not understand this influence of hers. It was a theme of poets, often proclaimed. But here it touched her close: she was the star that hung like a beacon in his heavens to guide him from hell back to earth and on to heaven. The

house of stone upon the granite ledge was but a symbol, a poem, — a temple he had raised in her honor, a shrine also to hold her. It was sweet, the lover's language and his ardent worship: it wafted her, too, heavenwards. She doubted if the young diplomat could give such sensation to Vera. . . . But now, fast coming towards her, was something else — life. And the woman in her must rise to meet it, — not a matter of glowing words, but a far-reaching decision.

Of that she pondered gravely all the long days crossing the seas. She must now meet her fate and answer. One awaited her out there beyond the sea, — a gaunt man with hungry eyes. Already, masterlike, he had taken full possession of her soul.

IX

INSTEAD of the Wild One from the north, however, it was the Colonel, who stood firm planted upon the dock to welcome her,—the Colonel, large and busy and prosperous. Behind him was Dr. Percy,—dark and dapper, with a broad smile of welcome. It was the familiar bustle of home coming,—flowers, letters, telegrams, chatter. Mrs. Goodnow and the Colonel became immediately involved in a lively altercation with the inspectors over the Goodnow trunks, and angrily denounced the law of their land, which had made them and their prosperous kind what they were.

“Yes, I’m glad to be home, of course,” she was saying to Dr. Percy, “and perfectly well! Pleasant voyage, but I’m tired of gadding about.” Her eyes were roving among the crowd of strange faces, searching for something,—some one. “I wrote him the day,” her heart murmured.

And when they were finally off, tucked up in the Colonel’s new car, threading swiftly through the crowded streets towards that large trim home in Suburbia, her eyes looked this way and that as if in search of a gaunt man with the air of the woods about him. . . .

“I hope John drives carefully—the traffic gets worse all the time,” Mrs. Goodnow complained.

Vera, who had just parted from her young diplomat, their negotiations almost concluded, smiled at Nell’s troubled

young eyes and sombre face. She said lightly to the timid lady:—

“You know, dear aunt, we are as near heaven in a motor on Broadway —”

“I wrote him he might come,” the girl’s heart kept saying, “and not a word, not a flower !”

Suddenly the girl leaned forward, and in the clear sky of family chatter, she said earnestly, placing her little hand on the Colonel’s plump knees:—

“Why do you cut off all the woods ?”

“What — where ?” the fat man stammered.

“At Sanguishine, of course ! All that lovely forest about the mountain.”

“How did you know about that ?” her mother demanded suspiciously.

Vera pressed the girl’s arm.

But the president of the Northern Pulp Company laughed good-humoredly, and replied in ready metaphor. Taking a bit of dainty lace from the girl’s gown between his chubby fingers, he held it up.

“Why, to make money for *this!*”

“It isn’t necessary,” the girl said vaguely, thinking, “He might have sent one little flower !”

“I don’t see why it troubles you,” Mrs. Goodnow remarked severely.

The Colonel developed lyrically the theme of material expansion. The pulp company was paying thirty per cent dividends, he remarked casually. He pointed dramatically to a newsboy on the corner with a bundle of papers under his arm.

"We must have paper!" he said oracularly.

Then he turned to his sister.

"Myra, you should get rid of your horses and buy a car instead. Nobody keeps a carriage these days."

Mrs. Goodnow, true conservative, resisted stoutly what she knew was inevitable.

Thus the family party rolled on through the great city out to their comfortable mansion in Suburbia. A fully perceptive glance at that castle of comfort would reveal not merely the Goodnows, but the soul of a nation as well. Of good red brick, with many shining windows, broad and ample it sat in a shaven lawn, with barbered hedges protecting it from the dust of the highway. A gravelled drive, as neatly brushed each day as the drawing-room floor, wound in a tortured curve from the gate through neat shrubs and flower beds to the broad veranda. The interior demands the pen of a real estate agent or new man-milliner, — with its fourteen masters' rooms, ten baths, and ample dressing rooms, its mahogany, waxed floor, tiled and fireplaced rooms, its music and drawing-rooms, hall and library and reception rooms, its telephones and tempered heat, its spotless order and cleanliness, — in one word comfort! The goddess of comfort was completely installed in this mansion of the Goodnows, ruling in her realm of Suburbia-Philistina. . . .

As the car, scattering little spurts of gravel from its great wheels, rolled to the door, the girl gave an involuntary sigh. It was home, the place where she would be, and yet it seemed to stretch out heavy hands to take her soul into bondage. She lingered in the hall while her mother trotted excitedly about the rooms, sniffing out possible disarrangements in

her domain and giving sharp orders to her maids. The scent of the cut flowers in the vases, the modulated chimes of the clocks, the soft pervasive heat, the riotous sunshine of the sunny rooms, the inviting depths of padded chairs, the soft rugs, the apathetic emptiness of the great house, filled the girl with strange dissatisfaction. It was the sudden hand of comfort reaching out to her young spirit, the double-damned respectability of Suburbia-Philistina that was speaking, hailing her relentlessly from those glittering heights of romance where she had latterly been dwelling.

“If he had only sent a little flower.” . . .

In a few days, nay hours, she must sink once more into the family atmosphere, as the rock sinks into the mass of tar, to continue the flourishing tradition of the Goodnows into another generation.

Mrs. Goodnow, still rustling in the spangled black of her travelling clothes, turned over the accumulated mail on the hall table.

“What’s this?” she demanded, holding up a white envelope with the unequivocal stamp of Sanguishine. Through her new lorgnette she studied the free scrawl of the address. The girl swiftly claimed her letter.

“Mine, please!”

“Oh, from the Wild One?” Vera inquired maliciously.

“Has *He* been writing you?” the mother asked.

The girl was already beyond sound of human voice.

“I don’t see why he should write you. . . . I wonder why he hasn’t sent in his bill!”

“Perhaps he’ll come and present it in person,” Vera suggested with her fine little smile.

Nell with the captured letter had fled up the broad staircase to the secrecy of her room, where behind double doors she could devour the sheets. Not a word of greeting ! As if she had not come three thousand miles nearer his wilderness, — was scarcely a two days' journey south of him ! No excuse for his absence ! The color flushed her cheeks as she read on. Girl — woman — what are miles, three thousand or less to love such as his ? Had he not, with passion's magic, kept her there close at his side these long winter months of waiting ?

With growing impatience she read more details of that house of stone, which he was finishing now with all a lover's tender care. Fantastic ! He had made himself carpenter in order that every touch might be wholly his. She would find it rude, no doubt, — he was no cabinet-maker by trade, too impatient even to be a good carpenter. Nevertheless, it was honestly built, of seasoned stuff, and solid as the eternal rock beneath.

As if he could compete with the carpentry of Suburbia — her heart was sick of building.

There was an air of masterly calm in these words, as though they were spoken by a man of accomplished will, who at last has found his mooring and anchored himself thereto forever. She might picture him up there in the first warmth of the northern spring, going to and fro within the little house, — hammering, sawing, contriving an immense settle to stand before the fire, covering it with the hide of a deer, — busy with eye and hand. The winter had fairly gone, he wrote, leaving irregular patches of yellowing snow-drift on the hillsides, like ornaments of

old ivory. The streams were babbling loudly. The hills gleamed with water and sang musically. The south wind, drawing through the thick forest, brought the scent of balsam, cedars, firs, pines, spruce, — an aromatic feast.

Pleasant words, but of slight substance to stay her hungry heart !

Then more about the sick in the cabins near the Healing Spring. As he had told her before, he had brought thither some of the feebler, who could not struggle to health all alone in their rough quarters. Latterly a woman,—a poor creature, whom he had discovered in utter misery at the camp of some hunters,—had given him much concern. “I thought she must die when first I found her — sport of fate and man, wretched and hopeless. But I have persuaded her that she can live — she is gaining slowly.” And half humorously he commented, “So you see I have started my hospital already, with this waif, and my old Gray Jack for helper. We will make the Spring do miracles once more.”

It was that which had kept him from her, — this woman-creature in her woe. The girl knew it instinctively, and resented it with strange passion. That any one could keep her lover from her, man or woman, in distress or peace,—it was an unforgivable insult ! With a long-drawn sigh and compressed lips, she dropped the letter into a deep drawer, filled with scented feminine fabrics, then gazed at herself in the glass, as if she would see emerge there a new person, quite free from all trace of insanity. She tilted her hat this way and that, evoking thus that new, perfectly sensible self, who was to take the place of the mad, wilful creature that had rioted in her flesh these past months.

Let him have his sick and his Healing Spring, his wretched waifs, and his stone hut !

“Marie !” she called to the maid. “Venez vite !”

“Oui, mademoiselle. Mademoiselle va sortir ?”

The telephone tinkled, a friend was calling. May or Adelaide or Josephine — what mattered it ? The hand of the gay, easy little suburban world she had always known was reaching out to her. Luncheon, then dinner, the play, the opera, incursions into the city ; long luxurious hours in her soft bed, with Marie and the breakfast awaiting her sleepy awakening, — all as it had been, as it was for a thousand thousands and more throughout the broad level land of Philistia-American. The crowded, trivial, chattering days, full of important nothings, — *Life* ! Yes, why not ? Life as it was for the thousand thousands and more who live in the comfortable mansions of Suburbia. . . .

She could not comprehend that these sick waifs he tarried to heal, for whose sake he put off love itself, like the stones of his little house were but offerings of love to *her*, — the ritual of his worship to that divine one he had made and set up, idol-wise, in his heart. For man is the poet, dreamer ever, half God, half beast, — ready to worship or wallow, transfiguring the human woman, like this girl, into the divinity of his dreams. While he cured the sick woman and adored the image he had made for himself, the girl was putting on a new gown of dazzling fashion.

Another “affair” safely ended, was the judgment of Vera.

Then *He* appeared, was there before her eyes in flesh, upon the pebbled drive. She had knelt to disentangle a

hyacinth whose head was buried in the damp mould when she heard his vigorous step. Rising, she paled. Her knees trembled, and her hands felt like ice.

His eyes devoured her, — those eyes that read beneath the skin. Taking her hands in his warm grip he held them for a moment, then frowned.

“Why are you pale and cold?” he demanded. “Aren’t you well?”

Pushing back the curling brown hair that hid his dreadful handiwork, he looked critically at her, muttering: —

“Why do you tremble like that?”

“I suppose,” her lips quivered between sob and smile, — “I was startled!”

Her color came back in a flame, and the smile triumphed. His stern face broke into tenderness and yearning. She understood that he could not have come before, not until that minute, indeed! She looked furtively at him.

He seemed no longer gaunt, — lean and hard rather, like the well-worked man, — and in place of the pallor was the healthily tanned skin of one who had lived altogether in the open and taken on his flesh both storm and sunshine.

“Your home is ready!” he whispered, and like a musical refrain of infinite meaning, “the house of stone built upon stone!”

“So you wrote,” she replied evasively, turning towards the large brick mansion.

He looked at the imposing structure with knitted brows, then broke into whimsical laughter.

“Is *that* where you live?” he demanded with rude irony.

“Yes,” the girl admitted; “and why not?”

It was considered in Suburbia a fine and dignified residence, in fact an architectural triumph and more — a certificate of character. With its ample breadth and solid seat, its gleaming, fluffily curtained windows, and shaded verandas, its flower beds and gravel walks, it seemed to look down coldly upon the stranger, and resent his rude criticism of its dignity.

He stared back at the house, glanced over the shaven lawn from which a gardener was extracting the weeds, at the gravel drive where another servant was erasing the last marks of wheels, then back at the girl, speculatively.

“So that’s where you live !”

“Yes,” she said uneasily, “for the last ten years.”

She suddenly became aware of her hero’s bizarre unfitness for the place. He had discarded his mackinaw and moccasins, to be sure; but rough homespun, heavy boots, and broad-brimmed felt hat scarcely equipped him for Suburbia. Her mind swiftly compared his appearance with that of Dr. Percy, of the promising Diplomat, and of Youth various, who frequented her world, — all smart and sleek like the lawn and the bushes.

“‘Tis a wonder for the gods !” the Wild One murmured, glancing from the girl to the house.

“I’ll show you the place,” she said with a blush, instinctively contriving to put off that shock of contact which must come when her mother and the Wild One met again.

So she took him through the pergola, down the formal garden with its Lilliputian art, by the Italian well-head (and empty well), to the kitchen garden. They came back past the stables and the greenhouses to a marble seat before the

waterless well. The doctor sat on the well-head and drummed with his knuckles on the empty bucket.

"It's like a play house," he remarked, and then musingly he repeated:—

"*Your* home is ready, — has been for a month. But that woman kept me. She's been trying to die. I've just persuaded her she can't."

"You have had much sickness in the woods this winter," she remarked.

"There were a couple of hundred choppers up there, and the smallpox got in. The company took no care of the men. The officers should be shut up in a pest-house themselves!"

She thought of the fat Colonel with his lyric praise of pulp and material development shut up in a pest-house, and laughed lightly.

"But the season's over, thank God, and the lumber crews have gone out with the cut. . . . And I've come for you!" he concluded casually.

"I should think you'd rather work in the city, like other doctors," she suggested demurely.

"Here?" he queried with another explosion of ironic laughter. "Set up my shop here and peddle pills and twaddle?"

"There are very good doctors in the city."

"I know — I spent the morning at the hospital with Jenks and Savage. I brought down a case for them to try their hands on. . . . I went over the whole place, like old times. . . . It's too much of a trade like any other, — like butchering or stock selling. . . . Wholesale, you know. . . . Why, they tell me Jenks makes his fifty thousand a year!"

"Does he?" she asked quickly, thinking of arguments for her mother and the Colonel.

"No man can do that who cares," he replied, shaking his head. He slipped from his perch as if he were impatient for her answer to the main question.

"I'll show you the greenhouses: we have some lovely roses," she said in haste.

So they inspected the greenhouses and the hothouses, the forcing beds and the flower garden. Then they wandered up the road between other remarkable specimens of Suburbia, set among smug green lawns, — mile after mile of orderly comfort, with the city smoking gloomily upon the distant horizon.

The unfamiliar atmosphere seemed to estrange them. They talked in subdued tones of nothing, she pointing out the monuments of the place and he examining all with ironical eyes. Then he spoke of his solitary winter fastness, the slaughter of the forest, the ignorant men whom he served there in the wilderness. He told her of his old Gray Jack, the drunken camp cook, and she could read in his careless words a lust for conquests, — sparkle of youth, — which made him work over his poor half-breeds. The sick were his field of battle, where he did prodigies of skill. To mould sick humanity, not merely dose men and women on their sick beds, — that was the large vague aim within him.

"They'll think it's the Spring," he said humorously, "when they get well — perhaps it is!"

She listened admiringly to his talk, but her thought was fluttering elsewhere.

"What gives you the power?" she asked.

He was silent, with moody eyes.

"You could do so much good in the city," she suggested deftly.

"One cannot heal in the city," he answered; "too many traders, too much reward!"

He waved a scornful hand over the smiling landscape of Suburbia, and dismissed it.

At last they came back to the Goodnow place and entered the house. Mrs. Goodnow, who was reading a book before a cheerful fire when her daughter said, "Mother, the doctor has come to see us," pretended that she did not recognize the stranger.

"Doctor?" she inquired. Then she gave him a nod. "So you have come to the city?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied quickly, "I have come to the city." He paused, while his eyes sought the girl's, then as if reassured, continued, "I have come for your daughter."

"What do you mean?"

"I have come to take your daughter back with me," he said more plainly.

"What —" the lady gasped.

"I think he means to marry me, mother," the girl explained.

"Marry my daughter!" The old woman's tone of horror expressed the philosophy of a race.

Thus the cataclysm burst.

X

WHAT the mother said was of no importance, abusive and angry as it was. The Wild One shrugged his shoulders, and with a slight smile looked over the domestic landscape of padded chairs and soft rugs, waiting. When he had sufficiently absorbed the interior, as he had before the exterior, he spoke in response to the final objurgation, "You must have lost your senses!"

"I think," he said calmly, "your daughter will decide this matter for herself."

His grave eyes sought the girl, who was standing beside the fireplace. She turned, and going up to her mother gave her a slight caress. Then she spoke gently, as she had done that other time when her life lay in the decision:—

"Mother, I shall go with him, wherever he wants."

The storm burst afresh, raging back and forth from the man to the girl. They stood apart silently, and the mother's tones gradually weakened, as if she remembered that other time when the woman in her daughter had first emerged from the girl, and with clearer will than hers had won the case. But this time the mother was giving battle on her own ground, with all the appurtenances of tradition and civilized Suburbia at her command to awe and subdue the enemy. That other time she had been helpless in the wilderness, without telephone or telegraph.

"Mother," the girl said evenly, "it's no use — I must do it!"

"We shall see," she stormed. "I will telephone your uncle!"

At the words the crunch of a heavy car on the gravel drive could be heard, and a burly figure burst into the hall, and puffingly threw off fur coat and goggled hat. The Colonel entered at the dramatic moment. His fat red face shone with blustering good health as he came forward into the light; he blinked at the stranger standing before the fire.

"Doctor — doctor," he stammered as though he were saying to himself, "the dope-fiend, by God! What the devil is his name?"

The Wild One straightened himself and drew his hands from the pockets of his baggy trousers.

"Well, well, just from the woods? How are things at the Lake?"

"Good enough from the lumber company's point of view," the doctor observed nonchalantly.

"We did make a good cut."

"Why don't you look after your men up there? That smallpox was a serious matter this winter."

"What?" the Colonel grunted sourly. "It isn't our affair; it's the contractor's."

"So I suppose!"

"This fellow," Mrs. Goodnow burst forth, "has the impudence to walk in here and demand Nell!"

"Come, now — what?" the Colonel roared.

"Not demand," the girl corrected with her little smile, half humorous. "I think he wants to marry me, uncle."

“What!”

“And I shall do it.”

A second time the cataclysm burst with renewed force: its effect had best be told in the words of Vera Councillor, who arriving at this juncture to keep a luncheon engagement found the whirlwind at its height.

“It seems,” so Vera confided to her discreet young diplomat, “that our simple little Nell had quietly been corresponding with that wild doctor of hers all the time we were abroad — at least he wrote her constantly and she must have made some sort of reply. I suspected it occasionally, but supposed it was merely the aftermath of a romance. She’s never seemed to me to be the sort of girl who could sustain romance like that. Will she? That is the terrible question now agitating the Goodnow household — and me. Of course *they* have done their idiotic best to commit her for good and all to her romance. . . .

“Last Friday HE arrived on the scene, unannounced I take it, — and in appearance much the same backwoods genius in spite of his attempt at city dress. Yet he looked ‘big’ even in Aunty’s drawing-room — you know I always admired him. And I thought he had a new note in him, — a sort of calm yet fiery will. He certainly had himself in hand and made the best impression of all. . . . It seems he and Nell had met earlier and had been walking around for hours before she dared bring him to the house — perhaps he merely came! When he arrived he coolly told Aunty that he had come for her daughter. Fancy! When she objected, he referred the matter to Nell, and she decided — just as she

did that other time when it was a question of opening her head. One would say he had some sort of mysterious power over her, though she seems to act of her own will. . . . I believe myself she is frightened at the bottom of her heart.

“Well, the storm had burst just before my arrival. In the midst of it the Colonel blew in, and received an insult, I gather, from the Wild One. Insults were passing about rather freely. When I got there, the battle was in full cry. Aunty was talking very plainly, making nasty little remarks about adventurers, fortune hunters, etc., punctuated by the Colonel’s explosions, ‘Nonsense’ ‘Oh, I say it’s infernal rot.’ ‘Damned impudence,’ and the like. Of course Aunty mentioned the social,—what shall I call them?—distinctions, but that did not seem to bother the Wild One much, nor anything she said, in fact. He merely stood there without apparently listening, as if she were a meddlesome fly, buzzingly, annoyingly vocal, to be endured for a certain length of time.

“After all Aunty need not have made it so broad, the social difference. For what was she but the daughter of a country parson teaching school at Bellows Falls when dear old Uncle John married her and carried her off to the city and fortune? He was a clerk in the bank, then. Of course uncle became very successful and prominent—he was the kind that would arrive anywhere. But Aunty, in spite of all the money and the position he gave her, still reminds one of Bellows Falls, ‘doing the dishes’ and ‘keeping company.’ And it is just that sort, you know, who feel the awful social gulf, when the next generation comes along with nothing but hope and courage in its pocket. It has always seemed to me ridiculous in

our country, this sudden discovery of immense social distinctions. The only standard we ever had is money, and Uncle John's modest million or two hardly puts Aunty in the top class. (Though, the Colonel, they say, is getting very rich.) That part of the row, I confess, seemed to me plain vulgar. But if Aunty hoped to make any impression on the Wild One by shaking her dollars in his face, she must have been disappointed. His eyes were on Nell all the time, reading her, — perhaps holding her to his purpose.

"I don't believe the money idea ever entered his mind, really, — there are such men even to-day. When the Colonel in his sneering voice asked him, 'How do you propose to support your wife?' he replied quite simply, 'As you do yours — by my work.'

"'Practising medicine up there in the woods?'

"'Of course — why not?'

"'A fine prospect *that* for a refined girl!'

"'It's *my* work — it is a life good enough for any one,' he said with real dignity.

"'Treating dirty half-breeds,' the Colonel sneered.

"'Or turning the forest into wood pulp — which is better?'

"'I'll never give her any money if she marries you,' Aunty here pronounced. 'Her father fortunately left his money all to me.'

"'I hope you'll keep it: I want the girl, not your money.' . . .

"It was quite genuine and made you like him. But he needn't have been so stubborn. In fact, all of them were just *entêté*, and refused to look sensibly at the situation and make the best of it. The Colonel knows several of the university trustees, and Dr. Jenks is the most im-

portant man in the medical school. Between them they might easily steer Nell's genius into conventional respectability and prosperity. No doubt after they have all cooled off, something of the sort will happen. I know that Dr. Jenks has a high opinion of the Wild One's ability — I mean to tell him the whole affair if I get the chance. . . . To go back to my story: —

“With that last retort about the money, he turned to Nell and said quietly, ‘It’s no use my staying here. I’ll wait for you in the city. You can reach me at the hospital,’ and without so much as a look at the others he started for the door. His hand was on the knob when Nell called, ‘Wait !’ She slipped between Aunty and the Colonel — I thought she was going with him then and there — but she didn’t. Putting her arms around him, she raised her head and kissed him — a long kiss, before us all. ‘To-morrow,’ I heard her whisper. When she turned away her eyes were wet. In her face was that happy look she had when she gave herself to his knife, and as for him — the look of one who sees his angel of glory descending to him. Yes, just that, I can’t help it ! Oh, it’s *love* fast enough. But will it last — I mean can she keep the high key of romance ?

“When he was gone, she put her arm about me and squeezed me, saying, ‘You’ll help me, Vera dear ? I don’t want to be all alone !’ The child was trembling. I believe she’s frightened at herself.

“What happened afterwards with Aunty and the Colonel makes no difference. They were loud and abusive, scolded the girl like a maid ‘for encouraging the fellow.’ The Colonel said nasty things about his character ; he was a drunk-

ard, dope-fiend, thrown out of a European hospital, and all the rest of the stories he had heard at the Settlement.

“‘I won’t listen to you !’ Nell said, starting to leave the room.

“‘At least he might try to make himself presentable, — be some one,’ poor Aunty wailed.

“‘He is Some One,’ Nell replied with much dignity, and sailed off, leaving us to face the wreck.

“‘To think that THIS should happen to me,’ Aunty whimpered, ‘that my only daughter could lower herself so,’ etc. You know the vein ! When the older generation discovers that its young has a will of its own with ideas about life and chooses to exercise it against *their* will. . . .

“There was no hope of luncheon, so I left the outraged family to simmer down. And that very night, will you believe me, the Goodnow carriage drove up to our house and Nell got out with a little bag in her hand.

“‘You needn’t wait, Clem,’ she said to the driver, and to me she explained, ‘Will you take me in for the night ? I couldn’t stand ’em, talking about money, money all the time, — what they would do with their money !’

“She was quite pale, dressed in a summer gown, one that she used to wear at the Lake after she was well enough to go out in the canoe.

“‘That’s all my trousseau,’ she explained, holding out the little bag.

“I took her in my arms — she seemed so frail and girlish, standing there on the steps with her little bag. To think that Nell should make the great adventure — in this fashion ! . . . I fear for her.”

XI

MISS COUNCILLOR'S account of that next eventful day is also the best,—given in intimate confidences with feminine friends.

"I shall never be able to understand it, wholly," she said, "Nell's taking such a step as she did. Nell ! If it had been some other woman, more sentimental, a silly fool or exalted. But Nell is healthy minded and practical, more like Aunty really than one would suspect. And she is not what I should call intellectual, capable of acting from any theory,—not in the least,—nor a girl who doesn't care for things,—the commonplace little things, comforts and luxuries, and her own small place in her world.

"So that day she seemed to me like one in a trance, moving in an unrealized world. I must believe that man has done something to her,—I mean actually changed her mind, when he had her with brain exposed in his power. Why not ? Such strange things are done nowadays by these doctors ! Certainly all this winter in Europe she has not been her old self,—brooding and shy, with queer moods, half the time absent in mind. Or it may be just the fire of his love that has melted her character and remoulded it to his end. Either way he has created a new Nell,—remember that ! The awful question that haunts me is, will it last, this other creature of his making ? Terrible responsibility for him.

"Surely it was not the wedding I had expected for our Nell. Nor the one I should want for myself ! But of all girls I have known Nell should have the usual ornaments to life ; she is so fond of pretty clothes, and should have been married in satin and bridal veil, with flowers and cake and presents, a crowd of good friends about her, a full church with the organ trumpeting, and so on,—all the frills, in a word. They count for the woman, and Nell is so much the woman !

"Instead, she and I slipped away the next morning to the city on the eight-forty, and went out to the hospital. I said what I could to have him come to our house and give a semblance of decency to the thing, but she simply didn't hear me. It would have been awkward for me, too, I must confess. Well, we waited there in the office with nurses and patients,—horrid smelly place,—while they hunted up the Wild One. He hurried in to us with a brown paper parcel under his arm, all his 'outfit,' I suppose, as they say up north, or was it surgical implements ? He scarcely noticed my presence, but his eyes fired when he saw Nell. They stood there looking into each other's eyes, unmindful of the staring mob, looking, looking,—oh, he loves her, worships her ! It thrilled me, just to see it. But I wonder if he *knows* her, what she really *is* deep down, all the woman of her, from which she can't get away forever ? I hope so.

"There we sat in a corner of the crowded office, the three of us. Suddenly he jumped up, hugging his paper parcel and grabbing her bag in the other hand,—the same absurd little bag she'd come to me with. 'What are we waiting for ?' he exclaimed. 'There's the day express in less than

an hour—we must hurry!' And I believe they would have gone off 'way up there into the wilderness, just like that, without any ceremony, marriage, or anything, if it hadn't been for me. They did not seem to think of it! Perhaps it makes no difference,—going through the form, if you are throwing convention overboard as they are. However, I put in a word for respectability, if you like—insisted that they should see some one—a justice of the peace at the very least. He acquiesced at once, but Nell seemed quite indifferent.

"He went over to the clerk in charge and asked for the nearest minister, scribbled the address on his brown paper parcel, and then we started out to trail down the avenue in search of marriage. Was ever anything like it? Of course, you read of lots of people who do that very thing, but it never seems quite real—at least they're the sort of people one never knows, who live and die quite casually. Even our servants get married properly. So we three trailed on down the street, as I said—he didn't even think of getting a cab and I was so overcome with hysterical mirth at the whole thing that I didn't. He was carrying the big paper parcel in one hand and Nell's little bag in the other. The people on the street actually stopped to look: we must have had our business written all over us. It was like the play, at least like actors and actresses!

"We arrived at the address, on a dingy side street. I shall never forget the smallest detail of the thing,—the suspicious servant who opened the door, and how she made us stand in the vestibule while she went to consult the parson. Then the seedy little man, half asleep, who didn't look at us. I

suppose he has dozens of the same sort daily. What do they call it — 'legalizing passion'? We stepped into the front room, and there in that smelly parlor, with its shabby ugly furniture and dirty curtains, with the noise of people on the pavement just below the windows, the ash carts backing up to the curb, it was done. Helen Goodnow became the Wild One's legal mate, — Mrs. Frederick Holden. Think of it! To step off the crowded city street where every one is doing the commonplace things, with some man, and after a few gabbed sentences by a minister who has never laid eyes on you before to become Mrs. Somebody else, without even your own name to take away with you. It's funny, and it's awful at the same time. . . . No, I'd never do that, not for any man born on earth, no matter how much I might love him. I think I had rather go away without the ceremony, really! Yes, *really!* . . .

"I could see that I wasn't wanted as soon as the thing was done. We three drifted up the city and stopped at a restaurant for luncheon. Nobody could eat a mouthful, of course. (He ordered oyster stew!) He went out to find a time-table or get tickets or something, and Nell and I faced each other alone. She seemed quite calm, much less flurried than I was, but her thoughts were far away.

"'Please get Peggy for me and send her up if you can,' she said.

"'Don't you want any clothes?'

"'Oh, no — nothing of that sort — they wouldn't be suitable up there.'

"So I am to forward her pet dog by express, — no jewels, no clothes, no books, nothing civilized. She's thorough!

“‘And don’t be hard on mother,’ she said; ‘she can’t help it, poor dear.’

“Aunty !

“‘I hope she won’t be hard on me for my part in this affair,’ I replied.

“And that was all we said while we sat there alone. Oh, I asked her if she would write to me at once, and she replied vaguely, ‘Sometime!’ for all the world as if she were going into another life and expected no communication with this one. Then he came back and said there was another train sooner than he expected. So we drifted on toward the station. . . . The last I saw of them they were crossing the street in front of the station, just the two in the crowd bobbing all about them, he a bit ahead with his parcel and the bag. Nell gave me a little wave of the hand when they reached the other side safely, and turned to follow him. He was stalking on.

“And that is fate for one woman ! An accident throws her up against a certain man. Something happens between them — we call it love for short, or nature — or fate ? And then the world is turned upside down for the woman, at least. Will she be happy with her fate ? Who can tell — I have a sinking feeling at my heart when I think of her. There are so many hidden rocks in the channel she has chosen. I hope so, — oh, I hope so for her ! I never loved her so much as to-day. But I could not do it — never ! Convention is safer for the ordinary mortal, woman-mortal like myself. And I *am* ordinary mortal, so far as the woman in me goes, I know it. So is Nell, but I’m afraid she doesn’t know it, nor does *he*. Blind, blind — with a fierce flame !

They say that sort of flame dies down, leaving the world pitilessly bare and gray.

“He is not ordinary mortal, I am sure of that. But that also gives me fear. Happiness or tragedy from this morning’s work? I am wonderfully inclined to agree with Aunty for once; she dislikes ‘experiments.’

“We have just begun another experiment.”

If this intelligent young woman, who looked at her world with uncommonly clear eyes, could have seen into the depths of the hearts of these two who on that April morning had begun their great experiment, if she had felt their rapturous certainty, their glowing calm, like the smooth surface of deepest waters, she would have had less fear, knowing that fate held sweet as well as bitter in its store. And who could say that such sweet were not worth all the bitter that might come for endless days? Such sweet might be worth much bitter — for those who craved it.

Two out of the crowded city street off for the great experiment!

PART TWO



I

THE northern spring had barely softened the earth that April day when the two lovers reached the Lake. The black firs still dominated the sullen landscape, and in the clearings on the hillsides lay banks of drifted snow. The sun, dropping into watery clouds over the shoulder of old Macatawa, could not dispel the evening chill.

As their boat grounded on the sandy shore of the cove before the Healing Spring the young wife looked up eagerly at the little stone cabin hanging on the edge of the cliff. It seemed small and gray, like a lump of the lichenized rock on which it rested. In her dreams she had seen it larger, — almost grand, — springing airily towards the blue sky, with ample sweep of roof. Not this low, gray cabin, with its broad eaves that nearly touched the ground. Unconsciously her glance shifted from the stone cabin to the man, who was hauling the heavy boat up the shore, as if to assure herself that he too had not shrunken under the test of intimacy. He was busy in securing his boat and getting out the few supplies they had brought with them from the Settlement, his attention absorbed as always in the thing just before him to be done. At last he turned to her with a smile on his sombre face, as if he would welcome her to her new home — his land. Then lading himself with the bundles, he started up the steep path along the cliff and she followed.

When they stood before the rough plank door of the little house, she felt anew a sense of disappointment in the grim bareness of this home. It was like the chill of the April evening. Set on the very edge of the cliff, facing the hills beyond the Lake, hemmed in at the rear by a thick growth of firs, the stone house was solitary. Lonely and bare! . . . Holden put down his bundles and waited before opening the door, a curious smile on his face. He watched her while she examined her new home,—his handiwork. It had been built by him in winter storm, through struggle and stress, stone laid upon stone with love and aspiration,—would she understand? She smiled back at her husband bravely, as if trying to comprehend all that it meant to him.

“We will cover it with vines,” she said.

Slowly he pushed open the heavy door, and slightly bending their heads, they stepped in together. There was one large rectangular room, with a bank of windows on either side, north and south. At the east end a huge fireplace occupied the entire width, built monumentally of weather-stained slabs of granite taken from those seams that the lapping water had stained with iron. Within the cavernous hearth upon two pieces of black basalt rested a pyre of drift-wood, with dried juniper boughs beneath. Holden struck a match and handed it to his wife. She knelt on the rough hearthstone and touched the feathery tips of the juniper, which leaped swiftly into flame that curled through the gray wood, giving out an aromatic odor. Suddenly after a moment of smoky dubitation, the entire pyre burst into flame, lighting the large room to the recesses of the rafters. The ruddy flames illuminated the figure of the woman crouching

on the broad hearthstone, and of the man standing by her side intently watching her.

For some minutes she knelt there, staring into the flames, as if fascinated by their fiery fervor. Then drawn by his shining eyes she looked up at him, and with a little cry of joy slipped into his arms. Their trembling lips met. This she knew was the sacrament he had willed for them, on the altar of their new hearth, not that other affair of mumbled words in the minister's front parlor!

She forgot now that first loneliness, which had chilled her heart at the touch of the stern wilderness. As the fire ate hungrily of the dry wood, as her husband's kiss burned upon her fresh lips, all thought of the past — everything behind and below — faded from her mind. She was wholly his, as he had willed it to be.

“Eric,” she murmured with fluttering breath, linking her hands about his bare head and looking into his deep eyes, — “my husband !” . . .

There was much yet to be seen in this new home, small as it was. The floor, made of broad stones whose faces had been washed smooth by the water, was covered with bear skins. Before the fireplace there was a broad settle covered with deer hide, and a heavy table of oak planking ran beneath the southerly windows. A few rude chairs of bent willow, such as Indians make, cupboards and shelves, completed the furniture of the room. Like the walls and the roof it was all the man's own work, — rough and strong, with the natural qualities of material not disguised by craft.

At the west end — opposite the fireplace — a little door

led into another room, raised by one step. Here where the smooth ledge cropped up out of the ground he had made her a room of her own that jutted out clear above the Lake itself. As she entered that first time the westerly window was still red with a ray of sunshine which had contrived to pierce the watery clouds. Here on a broad seat cushioned with skins she might lie and watch the Lake and the clouds floating across the hills beyond, and stormy nights hear the wind rushing through the firs and the beat of the water against the curving cliff below. Within a recess in the opposite wall was a bed of balsam freshly cut and fragrant beneath its blanket cover.

He had thought of all — and made all ready before he came for her. This was the small inner room where he would shrine her apart from the world, even from himself.

That night he got their food, cooking it skilfully like a woodsman on the bed of coals, while she lay on the settle and watched him. As they had forgotten to bring candles or lamps, they ate by the flickering firelight, sitting gayly on the floor before the fire.

Already the silent cabin, with the dim shadows upon the raftered roof from the flickering flames, and the small, still, chamber beyond seemed to be hers. From this hour her life was to be lived therein. And the man crouched by her side before the fire, the glow illumining his dark face, was that lord and master of her spirit, who had taken her from the world she had known into his own kingdom. . . .

“Eric,” she murmured.

He turned to her questioningly, and she was silent.

"What is it?"

"You must never leave me," she faltered. "I should be afraid, alone."

"Afraid!" His voice rang loud in the silent cabin.
"Afraid of what?"

She shivered, not knowing how to express her feeling that now she had left her own world so far behind, she must always have him by her side to make another.

"Don't say that!" he chided gently. "You and I have had the courage to cast out fear, remember — forever!"

He touched her head with the tips of his fingers caressingly. His face, so firmly graven in the firelight, had the calm surety of one who at last, after struggle, had come into his kingdom. The peak of his high desire, shining in sunlight or dimly veiled, was now revealed close at hand.

The brown hair fell from her temple, disclosing the long scar that he had made. His fingers traced the wound. She saw in his eyes the soft glow of wonder and worship for her.

"Fire of life!" he murmured.

"Oh, Eric!" she cried, her childish face suddenly grave. "If — I were not all that you think — all that you want! . . . I am so little — so small."

He closed her protest with his lips, murmuring:—
"Small! You have given me the gift — the gift," he sang in her ears.

"The gift?"

"My gift — the gift of life itself."

"I would like to give you all," she said simply.

"Mine — mine," he whispered.

"Yours!" . . .

Thus the world was shut without these two, and here in the silence of the great wilderness, in the dim twilight of the stone house over whose rough walls the red firelight danced, man and woman became one.

The man held the dream of his heart. The woman, murmuring, "Yours — make me what you will!" yielded to her master. . . .

Lying in his arms on the bough bed through the still April night she could hear a little wind breathing softly around the corner of the cabin and a plashing of waves below. Lying in his arms she could hear the pulse of the man's heart beating steadily, strongly. And a new mystery came over the childish face, prefiguring what she was to become, — woman and mother.

II

SHE woke alone in the small, silent chamber and for a time lay wondering at the transformation of her life. Far beneath the waves lapped softly on the rocks. After calling "Eric, Eric," and getting no response she ran to the window. It was dazzlingly blue outside,—the Lake, the sky, the forest, the hills. The canoe lay below, nuzzling into the sandy beach. In the outer room the gray ashes of their first fire powdered the hearth. Hearing footsteps outside she opened the door to see a red-faced little man with snow-white moustache and hair bowing before her.

"Morning, ma'am!" he said. "Doctor's at the Spring. I'm getting your breakfast ready." He pointed into the firs where the roof of a "cook shack" could be seen.

"And you are —"

"Old Gray Jack! Yes, ma'am, old Gray Jack — good for nothin' old Gray Jack!"

He smiled, bobbed his head, and disappeared into the firs. When he had reappeared with the breakfast and put it on the table, he stood at attention in military fashion and explained himself: —

"That's what they called me in the army, twenty years back, — old Gray Jack. I cooked for the officers' mess. And a drunken fool I was too, ma'am. And they called me

the same out on the plains where I cooked for the round-ups — the big ones they used to have. And a drunken old fool I was then, too!"

He paused to fetch a jar of honey from the cupboard and place it beside the coffee and bacon.

"Wild honey — *he* got it up yonder on the mountain."

"Tell me how you came here?" she asked.

"That's a long story," the old fellow replied, thoughtfully stroking his white moustache. "The doctor found me up in one of them lumber camps. He saved me life, ma'am, just that!"

"I've heard him speak of you."

"Not much good there is to be said of Gray Jack," the old fellow chirped cheerfully. "Camp cooking and drink for thirty years — that's all — till the doctor got hold of me. He's a wonderful man, the doctor!"

The young wife smiled happily.

"Of course he is!"

"He just took me home with him to his cabin up yonder and cured me. It's been most a year now, and I have never been down the Lake once to the Settlement. Before 'twas every other week, regular!"

"And the Spring water cured your rheumatism?"

"Maybe it was the water — and maybe not," the old man said with a twinkle. "How can one tell? . . . There's the doctor now!"

Holden came in with a preoccupied air, a slight frown on his dark face, and gave some directions to the old man. The wife realized quickly that even their great romance, so momentous to her as to absorb her entire being, must come

to the man as an episode, a link in a long chain of fact that had begun before they had met and would go on always, more or less outside her reach.

"The woman is worse," the doctor explained.

They sat down to their first breakfast in the little stone house.

"I meant to get your breakfast," she said.

His face cleared from its preoccupation.

"Gray Jack will help you — he's a good cook."

"He's been telling me what you have done for him."

Holden laughed lightly, saying: —

"He had his trial while I was away. He stayed on here with that sick woman — never went once to the Settlement. He'll get to be a man yet!"

After breakfast they went down to see the one patient. The cabins in the grove of beach trees had been roughly patched and fitted with doors and windows, but they offered poor shelter for the sick.

"Gray Jack and I have done the best we could," Holden said. "But we must build something better if others come to us."

She noted idly that he spoke as if he expected more patients, and she wondered where in this wilderness they would come from. . . .

They entered the cabin where the half-breed woman lay. She was a miserable, wasted creature, hardly older than the doctor's young wife, yet with the marks of age on her bony hands and face. There was something in her wretchedness, her greasy black hair, her emaciated features, that

was repulsive to the dainty woman. She felt stifled in the small cabin with this sick creature breathing heavily, and she shrank from the glance that the woman gave her out of her little eyes.

It was for this poor half-breed woman that her lover had failed to meet her on her return from Europe! That he might care for her and nurse her back to her life! She watched her husband curiously. He seemed wholly oblivious of the woman's squalor, and touched her dirty flesh softly as he might fine silk. When the sick woman was racked with a sudden spasm, he held her in his firm grasp until she sank exhausted. The young wife could bear it no longer, and stepped out into the open air where all was gay and fresh with the fragrance of coming spring. Presently the doctor joined her.

"Consumption, I'm afraid," he explained. "Poor woman! She has children — I must get her well!"

In his tone there was the ring of a superior will that must always conquer — the true source of his healing power.

"Who looks after her?" she asked.

"Gray Jack and I mostly. A woman comes over from the Settlement to help."

"I suppose," she said slowly, "you will want me to help you — to nurse —." She tried bravely to overcome the sense of repulsion that the sick woman had roused. Her husband looked at her with a curious smile on his lips, as if for the first time a new aspect of their union was presenting itself to his mind.

"Perhaps, sometime," he said vaguely, "when there is need."

Secretly she hoped that the day of that need would be long coming. She looked up at the little stone house resting on the cliff above in the full morning sunlight, and already it seemed to beckon to its mistress. Up there was light, life, love! Things she understood.

"I must start my vines," she said lightly. "Your old Gray Jack promised to help me make a garden — just beyond the house on the tip of the rock. It will be lovely there!"

On their way back they passed by the Spring. A neat path now led from the cabins through the alder thicket to the green pool where the healing water steamed. All under-growth had been cut away from the pool, leaving a clean pebbly edge, and on one side a slab of smooth stone had been placed.

"Gray Jack and I cleaned it up," the doctor explained.

They stood for a moment on the stone, looking into the green water over which hung the thin veil of vapor. A blurred image of themselves rose to greet them through the steam.

"He thinks it cured his rheumatism. The lumber jacks come in here sometimes to get the water and to bathe. . . . It's well they have some sort of a fetich. . . . I must build a proper bath-house!"

Again it seemed to her that he spoke as if his work were to enlarge and remain here in the wilderness beside the Healing Spring.

When they reached the stone cabin, they found Gray Jack all ready, spade in hand. He had brought some loam and leaf mould in a basket and dumped it on the bare rock.

"There'll be many a load of that before the garden is made!" he grumbled.

That day they began the garden, cutting a circle from the stiff firs beneath the windows at the very end of the rocky plateau. An old stump was left, and also a large flat boulder for a table.

"I shall plant hollyhocks and larkspur beside the windows," she said.

"To nod to you at sunrise!"

"And afternoons we will sit here in the shelter of the firs and listen to the thrushes. Do you remember the thrush that sang that first time we came here?"

So they worked and played, like children, through the on-coming spring, fetching plants from the woods, setting out vines, making their garden on the rocky ledge above the Lake.

III

THUS began for the woman her new little world, so remote from that bustling other one that she had always known. She found that she had done well not to have brought with her either clothes or trinkets, — anything that might remind her of old habits and uses. Her Wild One did not care for adornments, — the little beauties and elegancies of her old self. Everything, she dimly perceived, in their lives, in themselves, was to be created afresh by themselves, here in the solitude of the wilderness where only the elements of things were. It was his idea: she did not question it. Enough for her that she was living with him an idyl of love as sweet as her girlish dream had imagined. To be gloriously alive from dawn until sunset, free as a bird in her little nest above the shining lake; to be served, adored, worshipped by her Wild One, — that was an existence blissfully perfect. And it would be thus always! . . .

One day the making of the garden was interrupted. A canoe put into the little bay, and a swarthy man climbed the cliff path and knocked at the door. The doctor was wanted in one of the distant camps above Belle Fourche. Thereafter these summons by Indian or half-breed messenger became more frequent, — now in the morning, again at night when they had settled themselves before the fire for a long evening of work and talk, or in the chill misty dawn.

Often she went with her husband on these expeditions, up through the chain of lakes and rivers, helping with the paddle, making the carries, learning the trails that wound through the valleys and hills into the distant camps of the wilderness. They visited the lonely huts of the trapper, the squalid Indian tents, the boarded shanties of the lumbermen. She helped her husband in his work with the sick, swiftly acquiring the necessary skill. Always, however, she shrank from the misery of these rough people stricken by disease in their ill-smelling cabins. Disease and squalor were insurmountably repugnant to her nature. The doctor did not seem to see this misery, to feel the meanness of these hovels. The dirty, ugly human bodies he touched with his delicate fingers as though they were fine and precious. Watching him she often marvelled.

"They are always sending for you!" she protested once. "Isn't there any other doctor they can get?"

"Oh, yes," he laughed. "But they want *me*. They think I can cure them."

And then with an ironical smile he continued:—

"The sick are weak. They worship strength. They look for some power from without themselves to work a miracle. . . . I am their nearest chance of the miracle!"

"It is good to be a miracle for any one," she said thoughtfully. And he laughed at her seriousness, — youthfully, glad of his strength, his skill, his will, — ready to make long journeys into the wilderness to carry his healing power to those in need. And the woman was sufficiently happy to be near him, to be his companion on the lonely journeys.

So all through that springtime, when the stern north

was rioting in its brief season of birth, they made these errands together, paddling over the silent waters under starry skies, sleeping out under the thick firs, or lying beneath their rain-soaked tarpaulin through a storm. To the woman of Suburbia, with her clipped and ordered experience, there came a new feeling for life and nature, a love for this large, silent, outer world of primitive circumstance, rough-coated and harsh, yet always beautiful. At night in the lonely forest she crept into the sheltering arms of her man, — a hardy, brown creature, half dryad, shy and loving, soft mould for the man's will.

So enveloped in this new existence she became that she never asked herself whither it led, — if it were to be always thus, the two of them nestling alone in their stone cabin with the growing vines, on the bold cliff above the Lake. Her Wild One, who had taken her from death itself, had transported her to his wonderful dream life, where even the sick he visited seemed scarcely real, rather another reality she did not fully penetrate. She felt, in rare moments of inner speculation, that it would continue for the years and years of a full life, — all that had been in her girl's existence fading farther and farther into the misty outer horizon of her soul.

Now and again the doctor brought his sick out of the wilderness to the Spring so that they might be under his eye more constantly and also have better chances of recovery. For these he had only the old cabins, ill provided and mustily decayed, patch and clean them as he might with Gray Jack's help. He talked of building something larger, better,

suited for the sick. One sunny June morning when the birds were nesting in the thicket about the Spring, he marked out the place for his new cabin-hospital, while his wife sat by on a log and watched him. He chose a little clearing against the cliff under some gray birches where the sun lay longest. With his axe he cut away the sapling undergrowth, hewed stakes, and drove them into the ground to mark the four corners. Then with his brow knit in thought he paced out the dimensions, and apparently dissatisfied with the space he had first enclosed he went over it again, adding until he had nearly doubled the original size.

"Why do you make it so large?" she asked.

"It will be needed," he replied vaguely, "and more too!"

"Where will you get the logs for such a big cabin?"

"This is to be of stone!" he exclaimed suddenly, as if the purpose to build solidly for all time had come to him at the moment.

Then and there the plan was made, and the first corner-stone, a huge rock that had fallen from the cliff, was rolled into place. As they slowly climbed to their house that night, Helen asked:—

"So you mean to be here always?"

"And why not?" he retorted quickly. "What could take me away — now?"

"Oh, one can't tell," she said with vague dissatisfaction at the prospect opening before her.

The new building with its great corner-stone seemed to seal the future, and suddenly the world was narrower, — that large, free world in which she had roamed these past weeks with her lover.

"You don't want to run away?" her husband asked teasingly.

"Leave you!" she cried, her brown hands clinging about his neck. "Never — that could never happen."

"Oh," he smiled ironically, "anything can happen!"

IV

ONCE every month Holden went over to the Settlement across the Lake in his large boat to fetch supplies and what letters there might come for them. The day after the new building was staked out he left early in the morning for the trip, planning to bring back with him materials and tools for the work he had begun.

Alone with the June day on her hands, Helen idled in her little garden behind the cabin, where the tiny shoots already had begun to appear, then wandered along the shore in the direction of Colonel Blake's camp — the Eyrie. These last warm days of late June had brought out the flags on the wooden hotel at the Settlement. The fishing season was on, she knew, and the hotel had opened for the first adventurers into the wilderness from the cities. Occasionally a boat or a canoe darkened the blue water as it passed up the Lake through the narrows. This morning a boat came so close inshore under the cliff that she could hear in her bedroom the voices of men talking beneath her.

“Who lives up in that perch?” some one asked.

“The Healer,” was the reply.

“Healer! Is that what you call a doctor?”

“He’s no ordinary doctor — he cures folks,” the guide replied with conviction. And afterwards, “He married a city girl and built that place up there.”

“Rather lonely for the city girl,” the stranger observed

in a mocking tone, as the boat slipped out into the broader waters of the Lake. . . .

While she followed the uneven path through the woods, Helen thought of those chance words. They came to her like voices of the past, like the flags on the hotel, the white sails of the pleasure boats.

She had not visited the Eyrie since her return to the Lake with her husband. She knew that he did not care for the place. The vines that she and Vera had planted were growing thickly over the boarded windows and doors. A colony of squirrels had established themselves under the veranda and scattered their provender carelessly over the floor. At her step they scampered off, and she could see their little beady eyes fixed upon her malevolently from their retreat. She walked around the house, trying to find some loose shutter through which she might peer into the familiar rooms, but every crack had been carefully closed against the searching winter storms. So she sat down on the step in the warm sunlight and looked at the sparkling water, over which a little sail-boat was making its way.

A year ago, very nearly, she had come hither like the boys and girls who would presently swarm about the big wooden hotel and play on the Lake. All the sensations of those girlish days came sweeping back over her, emphasizing her present changed condition. She looked at her rough brown hands, her worn corduroy skirt and clumsy moccasins — the natural dress for her life — and thought of all her dainty clothes shut up in the closets of Suburbia. . . . What was Vera planning for this summer? The one letter she had received from her old friend lay unanswered. And that

absurd little Dr. Percy — had he come back to the hotel this season? . . .

A sail-boat seemed to be laying its course directly across the Lake. Shading her eyes with a hand she stepped to the edge of the veranda and watched its approach with interest. The figure in the stern at the tiller was familiar, and the man presently waved a hat as if in recognition. She decided the fat little person must be Dr. Percy and involuntarily turned to fly, but it was too late. He had come to call! While he was making fast the boat, she saw his companion, — an older man.

Dr. Percy came running up the steps, holding out his hands cordially.

“It’s like old times to see you standing there! How are you?”

“You didn’t expect to find me here?”

“I — I didn’t know — exactly,” he stammered, and she wondered what was the city version of her flight with her Wild One.

“We live up the shore a little way — won’t you come back with me?” she suggested with strange eagerness.

“I — I am taking this gentleman — let me introduce him — perhaps you know him already, — Mr. Elport — Mrs. —”

The stranger, who had been lagging behind, stepped forward quickly and said with ready cordiality: —

“I know your uncle, Colonel Blake — we’re partners in a way, you see!”

He smiled at her beneath his gray moustache, and she found herself turning unaccountably crimson. The world with its ways was strangely disturbing.

"Indeed," she remarked coldly.

"And I knew your father, too," he added more gently, with his winning smile, "Mrs. —" he paused for the name that Dr. Percy had not given.

"Holden," she supplied, again consciously blushing.

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Holden — I remember hearing the name." This time he smiled more enigmatically, and she wondered what he had heard about her husband. "I would like to meet Dr. Holden — where do you live?" he asked quickly.

"A short half mile up the Lake — come back with me, won't you?"

The two men walked by her side chatting in that light, comfortable manner she had so long been used to. She looked at Elport with especial interest. He was a man over fifty, large and heavy, with the white face and somewhat flabby movements of the city man after a hard winter. He was very much the gentleman, she judged, according to her old standards, — that is, thoroughly experienced in those conventions she had known, and he had also the air of being a man of force, of importance in his world. She liked him at once. She tried to remember if she had heard his name before, if she knew anything about him.

"Percy here," he was saying, "has shown me some good fishing. But I really came up into the wilderness for business, you know. We are going to run a railroad in here, — the Colonel and I!"

"A railroad into the Lake!" she exclaimed, uncertain whether to be pleased by the announcement. "That will bring people, won't it?" She felt sure that her husband would not like it.

"Of course! That's what we are building it for — to bring in people and get out timber!"

"You will spoil the woods."

"Oh, we're not coming your way, Mrs. Holden — we go up the other side. We'll leave you your wilderness a little while longer!"

"When will you do it?" she asked breathlessly, like a child.

Elport laughed.

"Not this week!" he said gayly. "We hope to reach the Settlement by late autumn." And with another of his sympathetic smiles he added, "By that time you may be ready to receive a few visitors."

"I'm afraid my husband won't like it — won't like it at all," she observed quite seriously. "You know he complains of the Settlement, says it has spoiled the country."

"He'll get used to civilization," Elport replied easily. "We'll bring him patients to try his skill on. No one could stay sick long up here!"

They had reached the little stone cabin. The doctor had not returned, and so the young wife showed the visitors the house and the garden on the edge of the cliff. Elport praised the view with the judicious air of a travelled man.

"It's not magnificent," he said, "but it has something appealing in it — fresh and unspoiled."

Presently the doctor came sailing into the cove, seated on bags of cement. She called to her husband and beckoned to him, but merely glancing at the group on the cliff he delayed unaccountably, making fast the boat and starting to unload it. At last Elport rose: —

"We must be off, Percy! Sorry not to have seen your husband, Mrs. Holden. I hear he is a very remarkable man. No doubt we shall have many a chance to meet later," he concluded lightly, with the easy confidence of the man who always found his way where he cared to go.

As the two visitors turned into the forest path, Elport paused and said pleasantly:—

"I knew your father twenty years or more ago — I am glad to meet his daughter."

"You knew my father?" Helen repeated with a sudden glow in her heart.

"And we all loved him who knew him — he was a good man of business, but he was much more — much more!"

She went a little way into the woods with her guests, and as she returned she thought with a curious pleasure, "He knew father. And he loved him!" Somehow those few words had broken the spell of her present existence. They roused memories and feelings that she could not fathom. . . .

Her husband was at the house when she returned, unloading the pockets of his hunting coat that had been stuffed with purchases at the Settlement.

"We had our first visitors, Eric!" she exclaimed.

"So I saw."

He was about to go back to the boat for the larger bundles.

"Why didn't you come up! I called to you."

"Oh," he replied vaguely, and she knew that he did not want to see the strangers. She pondered while he was gone, and when he had brought up all his bundles, she remarked:—

"Don't you want to know who they were?"

"The doctor pup was one," he said with a laugh.

"And Mr. Elport."

"The railroad man."

"How did you know?"

"Every one is talking about him and his railroad over at the Settlement, of course."

"They mean to bring the railroad to the Lake."

"When?"

"By next autumn."

"He told you that?"

"Yes."

After a gloomy pause Holden observed:—

"Well, that's the beginning of the end — the last of our peace."

"But Eric," she protested, taking up the defence of the invader, "it won't come on this side — it won't hurt the Healing Spring."

"It will bring the crowd just the same."

"Mr. Elport said it would bring you patients."

"Patients!" he flashed with sudden ferocity, jumping from the table where he had perched. Striding to the fireplace he kicked a burning log into the ashes. "What does he think I want of patients — that kind? Perhaps he would like to have me start a sanitarium here! A loafing place for a lot of lazy, useless old men and women — the kind that trot about Europe from bath to bath, coddling themselves and fattening doctors. I did not come up here into the woods for that."

She was amazed at the bitterness which he expressed, striding about the cabin and fuming against the railroad

and all the works of civilized man. Why he should object to having more patients — and ones able to pay him — now that he had already planned his big hospital cabin, was quite beyond her understanding. After a time he quieted down, and coming up behind her put his arms over her shoulders: —

“Never mind, little woman ! If the world comes bothering us, we’ll just move on — strike out into the great north. They’ll never catch us up there !”

His lips caressed her neck. Once more he was her simple Wild One, — impetuous, loving, mysterious.

“Of course !” she said easily.

But in her heart she could find no reason for moving away from the invader, no sympathy for this desire for the pure wild, this hermit-like evasion of what people had made of life. The railroad, it seemed to her, might be quite a good thing, — even for her husband, if he could but see it.

Later that same evening, as she was looking over the supplies which he had brought from the Settlement, she asked abruptly: —

“Eric, where does the money come from — do those people pay you much ?”

“No,” he said shortly. “I don’t ask them for money.”

“Then how do we live ?” she pursued.

“Oh, we live,” he answered impatiently. “Do you want some money ?”

“I need a few things,” she said hesitantly. “A few clothes — nothing much. I can write to Vera to send me up what I need.”

“No, no,” he replied impatiently. “That won’t do !”

And going to a corner of the room where he kept his papers and books, he said, "How much do you want? No — it's all there! Take what you want!"

Thus he peremptorily dismissed the intricate problem of domestic economy. The next time that she was alone and thought of it she looked into his recess and found a few worn bills, a little silver. Turning this money over in her hand, she smiled and thought that Elport's railroad, if it did bring rich patients who would pay for their treatment, might not be a bad thing. For all told there was but eighteen dollars in the cabin.

V

THE summer days went smilingly by, one by one, after this interruption. The young wife worked in her garden, alone now generally, for Gray Jack was helping the doctor lay the stone for the new hospital in the grove below. Sometimes she would look thoughtfully out across the Lake in the direction of the distant Settlement, where could be seen boats flying about, which meant people. She began to wonder if little Dr. Percy and the railroad man, with the pleasant smile and the agreeable manners, would come some day to make another call.

Then one warm morning while she dawdled in her garden she saw a sail-boat beneath the cliff heading for the cove. Dr. Percy leaped ashore, and hastily drawing up his boat, walked over to where her husband was working. The two men talked together for some time. She could see the little doctor's gesticulations and the characteristic mopping of his round face with his handkerchief. Holden seemed to say little, and at the end shaking his head turned back to his work. Dr. Percy lingered awhile, still talking, then slowly went back to his boat and without even a glance upwards pushed off and hoisted sail.

The young wife, watching this pantomime from her perch, was curious to know what it meant. When her husband came up for dinner, she looked inquiringly at him, and as he said nothing, remarked: —

"Dr. Percy came over this morning."

"Yes."

"Why didn't he come up to see me?"

"I don't know."

"He came for something?"

"He wanted me to see that railroad man, Elport. He's sick, and the young cub doesn't know what's the matter."

"Why didn't you go back with Dr. Percy?"

The reply came in an irritable flash.

"Let 'em take care of themselves! I've got my own work to do."

For a time she said nothing, somewhat aghast and silent, not understanding this refusal of help by her husband, who seemed to be at the call of every one. The work he was doing below in the grove was common mason's labor for which many a better hand might be hired for a few dollars. She ventured timidly: —

"Is he very sick, Eric?"

"How do I know? Your young friend seemed to think so. But he knows nothing."

"What is the matter?"

"Indigestion, the pup thought, acute indigestion. Probably been stuffing himself for years and taking no exercise."

After dinner, as he was preparing to go back to the Spring, she said: —

"You went to Temisko, twenty-five miles, in all that storm last week, to see a half-breed!"

"These are *my* people!" he exclaimed. "They have no other helper. . . . Elport can send for whom he likes —"

"But it might be too late!"

She looked at him significantly. That would have been her fate, had he refused his aid to her.

"Let them keep out of the wilderness!" he burst forth. "I'll have nothing to do with them, now or in the future. They can build railroads and put up hotels — and hire their own doctors when they get sick, too!"

She smiled at his vehemence, as though she would say: — "Yet you took *me* from that world you seem to hate so."

"Eric!" she said, detaining him with her hands. "He may be dangerously ill. You know what Dr. Percy is!"

His stern lips softened with a little smile.

"Eric, you owe your gift —"

"Not to them!"

"To any one who needs it — you said so! . . . What would have happened if you had refused to come to me?"

He frowned.

"Eric," she murmured, with a strange eagerness to win this point and bend his will, "Mr. Elport was an old friend of my father's. You will help him!"

He kissed her and went down the path without a word. She hurried to the garden and hung over the ledge. Presently she saw him shove his canoe across the sand and jump in. She waved her hand, a little smile on her lips, and she watched the canoe until it was but a blur upon the blue lake.

That afternoon she could do nothing but pace restlessly to and fro in the narrow circle of her garden, her heart beating with a strange excitement. It was the first exercise of her wifely power over the Wild One, — her first woman's triumph. But that was not all. Dimly she perceived that unexpected results might come from this chance circumstance where she

had influenced a man's will. In some unknown way, that she could not yet imagine, it might affect her husband's future and hence hers. Elport might be the link to bind them to that outer world which her husband avoided, and which she still felt akin to.

It was nightfall before the doctor returned. She waited until he chose to speak of his errand. In time he said:—

“Your little doctor friend was doing his best to kill his patient, — morphine, as usual.”

“What's the matter with Mr. Elport?”

“A lot of things. He has pretty thoroughly knocked out his machine with food and drink and foolish work.”

“Will he die?”

“Not this time, if he takes care.”

And later he let fall:—

“I've told him to come over here where I can look after him; I can't be running over to the Settlement every day, and that pup isn't fit to be left with a sick cat.”

“Here!” she exclaimed involuntarily. “Why doesn't he take the Eyrie?”

“No, *here*,” her husband said emphatically. “He can sleep in a tent; I'll teach him how to live like a sane man and get something out of his life!”

She smiled at the thought of Horace Elport, with all his worldly experience, being taught how to live by her Wild Man. Her husband seemed imperturbably convinced of his own methods.

So the next morning she helped make ready the tent, which Gray Jack put up beneath a branching beech tree. As she busied herself fetching the few articles that she thought

might add comfort to the distinguished guest,—even cutting the first flowers from her garden to place beside his cot,—she realized guiltily that she had done far less for the other sick that the doctor had brought from time to time to the Spring. Her husband, she believed, who paid no attention to these preparations, must realize also her unwonted interest.

Towards noon the hotel launch puffed into the bay and the invalid was taken on his cot to the tent. His man-servant accompanied him, also Dr. Percy, who hustled about the place fussily, evidently relieved to have another take the responsibility of his distinguished patient. When the invalid had been made comfortable, the flaps of his tent drawn back to admit the sweet summer breeze, he raised himself feebly and looked out through the scattered trees to the blue lake.

“A fellow ought to get well here,” he said with a smile for the doctor’s wife, who still hung about him after her husband had left. “If he can get well anywhere!” He closed his tired eyes.

“Oh, Eric will cure you, I’m sure,” she said confidently.

“You’re convinced your husband can work miracles?” he observed quizzically.

“Don’t I know? He saved my life.”

She touched the scar above her temple instinctively.

“That *is* proof,” Elport said more seriously. “But he probably thought your life was better worth saving than mine. He needed it! . . . Any way it is good to lie here under a green tree and hear the leaves rustle instead of listening to that piano in the hotel all day. It’s better than fishing — or building railroads, eh?”

"Perhaps you won't want to build your railroad after Eric has got hold of you!"

"You mean he will use magic on me? Does he do things like that? He would have me come over here — or would let me die in that hole by myself. And he wanted me to leave Andrew behind; let me have him for the first week — for a week! . . . I haven't done without him in twenty years. . . . Well, it's good to be here any way."

The new patient gave a touch of excitement to the young woman's life. Every morning and afternoon she visited him in his tent, finding little things to do for him, reading to him, chatting with him, and writing his letters for him. At the end of the week the man-servant went back to the hotel, and the sick man was content to have him go, for he was sitting up and buoyantly expected to return to the city in a few days. Meantime he dawdled about the new building, scoffing at the labors of the doctor and old Gray Jack.

"He's a good enough stone-mason, your husband," he said to the wife. "I'll give him all of three dollars a day if he'll come across the Lake and work for me on the railroad. Look at him take a chunk off that stone with his mallet. And he threatens to make *me* work, too!"

Holden, unmindful of this banter, worked steadily at the stone wall of his new building, which had already got breast high.

"Where is this healing fountain — magic water butt?" the railroad man asked presently. "He gives me the water to drink — it's very vile!"

Helen showed him the Healing Spring. Elport sat on the rock beside the green pool and gazed at it thoughtfully.

"Looks sort of devilish, doesn't it?" he commented. "But I guess it must be the doctor who works the charm, don't you think? Gray Jack was telling me this morning what he had done for him — and that poor old creature up in the cabin, — he's kept her alive by sheer will."

The young wife glowed with happy pride. Even if she had defied her world, with careless indifference to its judgment, it was sweet to have her justification sound from the lips of one that world would respect.

"He has the gift, all right," Elport observed after a time.

"The gift?"

"The gift of healing, yes! . . . It's about the greatest of all the gifts — and the rarest, much rarer than the artist's gift they make so much of, or the gift of getting money — that's about the commonest of all! Even *I* have that. . . . And he's content to hide his gift away off here in this wilderness. But we won't let him do that, will we, madam?" He turned to her with twinkling eyes, as if to include her in a conspiracy he purposed. "We'll publish him, exploit him — discover him to the world — make a great man of him!"

"I don't think Eric wants that," she said doubtfully.

"Oh, yes, he will want it," Elport retorted confidently. "Every man likes his fame when he can get it. Never saw one yet who refused it."

"But Eric is — so different from other men," the wife said doubtfully. "You would never get him out of his wilderness."

"Then I'll build my railroad in to him," Elport flashed back in his quick way, "and bring the world to him."

They strolled back to the doctor.

"Your wife and I have been plotting against you," Elport announced.

Holden looked at him with an ironical smile and continued his work. Helen saw that the two men — so unlike in every characteristic and experience — got on excellently. The older man took liberties with her moody Wild One that she would not dare to take herself, railed at him as medicine-man, herb doctor, quack, and dared to dispute his will. This time he persisted: —

"We're going to make you famous."

"Infamous, you mean," Holden growled. "A quack pure and simple!"

"Oh, well — what are you now? . . . And you don't make it pay — as you should."

A scowl crossed the doctor's face.

"Yes, that's the whole thing — the pay! And that's why half of them are quacks — why they can't do more than they do — they're working for the fee."

"Idealist! . . . Never mind, my dear," he said, turning to the young wife, "we'll make him infamous, then; he can't help himself, simply can't, when the thing is once started!"

She laughed, amused, but more than a little stirred by the light words of the railroad man. If it were true that her husband had this great gift — and she never doubted it — if in some way it could become known widely, — why, all sorts of things would happen, beautiful and alluring things that she had never considered before. For it never occurred to her seriously that a "gift" was anything to be kept reserved. Rather it was like a gold mine in one's private pas-

ture, from which the gold was to be dug straightway and used. Of course !

The next morning Elport was established trowel in hand beside Gray Jack, working at the walls of the new camp hospital. He waved his instrument cheerfully towards Helen when she appeared on the scene.

“Your husband wants me to know how it feels to work with my own hands. I tell him I carried a rod and chain in Nebraska before he was born !” He gayly patted a stone with his trowel. “But I’d rather pay a man now to stand here in the sun and do the job for me while the doctor and I went fishing.”

“Oh, that’ll come too,” Holden called out indulgently.

The railroad man did not get away that week, nor the next. He remained through the summer months, sleeping in his tent under the beech tree, working on the new building, also fishing and hunting with the doctor. Several times he accompanied Holden on his long trips into distant corners of the wilds. The young wife noticed with pleased surprise that the two men seemed to like each other’s company, as men of the most opposed experiences will. She thought that the practical, worldly man might be helpful to her Wild One in ways that he did not dream of.

Even after Elport was thoroughly established in health, — ready once more for the battle as he himself said, — he stayed on, or went away on business for short periods, only to return to his tent and his corduroy costume. Sometimes Dr. Percy came across the Lake, bringing with him men who had traced the railroad man as far as the Settlement and there lost the trail. Many an afternoon the young wife held her little

court around the tea cups in her tiny garden, with the railroad man, the young doctor, sometimes an engineer or a man from the city in attendance. To dispense her simple hospitality, to sit in her fragrant garden behind the vine-covered cabin while the sun slanted over the Lake, and listen to the talk of men, gave her much happiness. She was hardly conscious of the reason for her pleasure in this simple social activity, but she felt it was the right and proper manner of living.

Her husband rarely joined the group in the garden, busying himself as long as there was daylight in his work about the Spring. One August afternoon which she would long remember, however, the doctor came up from his work earlier than usual. Elport had brought out a great roll of blue prints and with their help was describing to her and Dr. Percy the plans for his railroad. As he talked of these deeds to be done, the untamed spaces of the world to be conquered, his face lighted with enthusiasm. The doctor came up behind him noiselessly and looked over his shoulder at the map on which the railroad man's fingers rested.

"We leave the main line at Savin's Mills, above the stage road," he said, tracing the proposed course, "and follow the river up through the valley until we strike the Lake just below the Settlement — and that's the end for the present. But another year we shall build on, by the east shore of the Lake, cross over the divide at Trader's Pass, here, and get into the Poltami district — there's gold over in there and a lot of timber — well, that's enough for the present, isn't it?"

"Ultimately," Dr. Percy joked, "you will aim for the Pole?"

"Yes, calling on the way at Hudson's Bay with a spur eastward for Labrador."

He looked up into Holden's moody eyes, and as if to answer the criticism he read there, he added:—

"It will open up all this great territory north of the Lake — get out the pulp wood, make farms in the forest. And as for this Lake, hotels will spring up like huckleberries along the shores when the railroad comes!"

"And that's what you call development!" Holden growled.

"Why, my dear doctor, we shall bring you patients by the hundreds! Instead of that stone cabin you have made me sweat over, you will have a great hydropathic establishment about your old Spring like those in England and Germany."

The doctor grunted moodily.

"No doubt! There's plenty of rotting refuse of your cities that would run here, or anywhere, if it became the fashion. I don't want them."

"You'll be in touch with civilization, man. A night and a day to New York — think of that! It will please the ladies, I know," he added with a smile for Helen.

The doctor merely shrugged his shoulders, while the others laughed.

"I have spared your Spring from desecration — you see the road will go the other side of the Lake."

"Thanks for so much consideration."

"That side naturally will develop first," Elport continued. "Colonel Blake, your wife's uncle, owns most of this side and the islands. It will be a great investment one of these days."

"That means nothing to us," the doctor replied with slow emphasis. "This is the return you give me for making you

well! . . . Better for us if I had left you in Percy's hands — then there would have been small chance of your building railroads this side of paradise."

"Many thanks, doctor!" the little man murmured with a rueful smile. Elport laughed. He refused to take Holden seriously.

"The railroad would have come sooner or later any way — and not much later. All the spruce on these hills is wanted to make pulp paper. Besides, the country has great agricultural possibilities. It must be opened up! . . . The pressure of population determines these movements, not the will of one man. We are but the instruments for the work," he concluded with a touch of whimsical fatalism.

"I wish this instrument had chosen some other spot for its operations!" the doctor grumbled.

"You will not say that five years hence, doctor, when this wilderness outpost is the centre of human life, the Lake busy with traffic — will he, Mrs. Holden?"

"I — I should like it," she stammered.

The doctor turned sharply away and after walking to and fro in the little garden for a few moody moments, burst forth passionately: —

"Development! What has your development done for this country so far? It has brought the scum of human labor here with their filth and disease and vice. It has cut those great gashes in the forests!" He pointed to the broad wounds on the slopes of Macatawa. "It will bring next a crowd of idle money wasters, — they are already hanging about the Settlement, corrupting the simple people that belong here. And that you call civilization!"

Elport and Dr. Percy laughed indulgently at the man's passion. The railroad man began to roll up his map, saying:

"But you can no more prevent it than you could dam up this lake with your own hands!"

"Perhaps not," Holden retorted, still fiercely. "But I can escape it, as I escaped it before! I can go on — farther into the peace of the wilderness, where evil cannot follow."

"And carry the Healing Spring with you?" the young doctor asked.

"And carry your gift into the wilderness?" the older man added more searchingly. "Let it rust there, unused?"

"Better that than to sell it, as you would have me, to set up a market here for the rich sick and sell them delusions at so much a minute!"

"Some day you will see the world differently," the older man remarked quietly. And there the talk rested. When Elport left with the little doctor, Helen sat silent, pondering what had been said, while her husband gazed moodily at the dark hills. Suddenly she demanded:—

"Why do you hate the world so, Eric?"

The Idealist, thus accused, denied the charge:—

"I don't hate the world."

"Then why do you want to get away from it?"

"I hate the game men play with one another — what men make of themselves in their world. . . . They try to turn everything into money. Doctoring — healing the sick — has become a trade! Didn't I see enough of that when I was at the medical school, and in the hospital? The big men using their reputation to bleed their patients who were rich enough to pay, and turning the poor over to boys like

that Percy to experiment with! . . . And that's what Elport wants me to do here, — run what he calls a 'hydropathic establishment,' — gull the public with spring water! Wheedle the rich out of their money and coddle a lot of old men and women who ought to die any way — or get out and work for their living! . . . I didn't come up here into the woods for that. Let 'em play the quack in the cities — ”

“But,” the wife protested, faltering, “the world is not all selfish and bad like that!” She touched his arm caressingly, as if she would soften his angry mood. “And when one loves,” she whispered, “one loves the whole world, too, a little.”

Her sweet face, with the waving brown hair, was held invitingly to his, but he turned away, — for the first time it seemed to her, — and went off moodily into the woods. Womanwise she felt hurt. She could not fathom her lover's hermit nature. Why seek to hide his light under a bushel? Why avoid the good that life might bring to him? He had the wonderful gift of healing — so it seemed — and why not use it, make it bear fruit, rich fruit?

She was all woman, with normal, healthy instincts, and she did not understand the nature of those who have gifts — the cloudy recesses of their spirits, where their power grows in the dark.

The new camp-hospital was finished before Elport went. He made a point of seeing the last details completed before he left, and induced the doctor to bring from the Settlement more workmen — carpenters and masons — so that the

interior of the building might be quickly finished. Helen suspected that Elport had supplied the money for all this outlay, inducing his difficult host thus to accept payment for services generously rendered.

And the railroad man had planned a great surprise, the secret of which the doctor's wife shared. Dr. Percy was sent to the city to procure for the little hospital the best of modern equipment, — everything that money might buy of apparatus. It was forwarded to the Settlement in great boxes, and one night Dr. Percy, Elport, and Gray Jack installed it in the new building. The next morning Helen followed her husband to the Spring, — a little fearful how he might take the fairy gifts, — to enjoy his surprise. When she reached the low stone building she heard within the genial laughter of men. The Wild One, evidently, had taken the better part and accepted the gift as it was meant, — merely joking in his grim fashion.

"I see you would make me a quack and turn the camp into a health resort, with all the up-to-date tricks for fooling the sick. But I'll never let one of your kind lie on those nice beds! I'll fill 'em with lumber jacks and dirty half-breeds, or they can stay empty."

Dr. Percy made a wry face, but Elport remarked easily: —

"I don't care what you do with them — they'll come in handy one of these days."

Helen could see that her Wild One was more pleased than he admitted with the neat iron cots, the wheeled chairs, the operating table, and glistening instruments.

"Now for the baths!" he remarked. "They could be

added at the back in an ell, and the water easily piped down from the Spring."

Elport looked at Helen with a smile.

"I see that will be my next job when I come back in the spring!"

Then they closed the neat new building, with its little row of six beds opposite the long southerly windows, and all four went up to the stone house where Helen and Gray Jack prepared a festival dinner of trout and partridge and venison in honor of the day.

"Here is another good thing from the city!" Dr. Percy murmured aside to Helen, as he skilfully manipulated the cork of a fat wine bottle.

VI

ON a crisp, clear day at the end of October Elport departed, taking with him the young doctor. The railroad man was exuberant with new vitality, and gay as a boy about to journey to an unknown city.

"You'll see me again!" he declared. "I'll come back to you on my railroad — and I'll boom your old Healing Spring in my folders, in spite of you, hermit!"

They paddled their guests to the stage landing at the lower end of the Lake. The trees along the water's edge had lost their leaves. A gusty wind from the northwest the night before had stripped their branches and piled the withered leaves in the thickets. Under the hard blue sky the earth seemed bare and cold, as if prepared for the long winter.

The grading for the new railroad had reached the Landing, and the dump cars perched on the crest of a long "fill" gave the young woman a strange thrill. They were the symbol of the activity of the great world without the wilderness. Elport pointed proudly to the grade.

"We've almost got to you, doctor!"

The two men were left at the wharf with their luggage. After riding in a rough wagon for a few miles they would be met by a special train over the new track and complete, in a couple of hours, the toilsome journey that took the stage a whole day.

The young woman's eyes filled with involuntary tears as she waved a last farewell to Elport, who stood on the log wharf and jeered at the doctor as long as his voice would carry across the water. She wondered at the indifference her husband displayed at parting with these two friendly comrades with whom they had spent so many weeks of happy living. He seemed quite content to have them go, as if he wished to possess his wilderness alone, with her and old Gray Jack. . . .

As they entered the Cove, the new building greeted them with its row of large glistening windows that reflected the setting sun. Under the bare branches of the great beech trees it sat square and firm and unadorned. The grove that had been filled with life these past weeks seemed empty, deserted. For the first time in many months there happened to be no patients at the Spring. The last invalid — the sick woman — had gone back to her people the week before. The empty cabins, the tent that Elport had occupied, seemed like forlorn shells of the summer's active life.

Holden closed the windows and doors of the new building and put the keys in his pocket. Then they climbed the steep path to their home. The doctor did not feel apparently the cessation of activity that oppressed her, — did not miss even the presence of the sick he had labored for. Had he lost interest in his work? Or was he willing merely to accept the period of quiescence before renewed action? . . . To her it seemed as if the bonds that tied her to her old world had been severed afresh by the going of the two men. She was restless and a little lonely. . . . Holden brought in a great bundle of fire-wood and threw it down on the hearth.

"We shall need a good fire to-night," he said cheerily.
"The wind is getting up again."

There was a light in his eyes as he suddenly turned to her with outstretched hands.

"We've been too busy to live this summer, little one — all the work and people about — but now the winter is coming. That's the real time — we'll live ! And first we must get ready. I'll clothe you in furs, my woman, from head to foot. You'll be like the russet leaves under the snow !"

There was joy in his voice, as if all these busy weeks he had been looking forward to the still, lonely winter time when they two — complete comrades — would at last find happiness in their love. His longing for her, his passionate worship of her, which had been held in check by the duties of the summer, were now given free rein. And transformed by this wondrous flame of his passion, she lost her sense of loneliness. She smiled back at him.

"We shall be very happy !" she said.

Thus began for these lovers the one wonderful winter of their lives in the unbroken solitude of storm and snow-clogged forest. At first they were busy all day with preparations for the long winter to come. Holden and some choppers had prepared a huge pile of fire-wood which girdled the north side of the stone cabin to the eaves and stretched out across the dead garden. A few days after the departure of their guests a gray blanket of cloud slowly filled the blue sky. It gathered imperceptibly, in deep calm, and by evening had closed in the earth with a dull, oppressive cover. There was the brooding sense of change in the damp air.

That morning the doctor with his men had gone in the largest boat to fetch from the stage landing the last of the winter's supplies that had been brought for them by the freighters.

"We shall have snow before night I expect," Holden had said as he left in the early morning. "I'll try to get back by noon." But noontime came, and there was no sign of the boat. Late in the afternoon when the young wife went to the door, she saw the first flakes of snow drifting silently, uncertainly out of the sky. They fell here and there upon the bulky woodpile, slowly peppering it with white powder. She went back into the house and busied herself. When she looked out again, the sky was dark with the falling snow, — fine, steady, persistent. It had already drifted in a little ridge before the door. It fell like a sheet between the windows and the Lake, cutting off all view. She returned to the empty room and heaped fresh wood on the dying fire. For the first time a sense of human isolation in the woods came over her. She was shut away in this small stone house from all the living world by the impalpable wall of snow. She heaped more wood on the fire until the crackling logs and glowing coals made a ruddy light on the gray walls. Then she drew the settle closer to the fire and lay there waiting.

By nightfall when she went out for wood, the snow was like a thick carpet, mantling the woodpile and the roof of the cabin, covering the firs. And still it fell, like a thick veil between her and the outer world. She was too restless to eat, to work. She thought that the men must have decided when the storm came on to spend the night at the Landing instead of attempting the blind journey of eight miles up the

Lake through the snow. Nevertheless, when it was quite dark she lighted the great reflector lantern and putting on a cloak set out down the cliff path for the shore below. She stumbled, but she arrived safely, the lantern still burning, and after some difficulty found the pole in the centre of the curving shore and set the light on it. In trying to place it firmly on the rest, the heavy lantern slipped from her numb fingers and fell into the snow. The light went out. She had forgotten to bring any matches with her, and for a while she stood shivering, wondering what she should do, afraid of the white silence about her.

Then the thought of her husband out in the storm, striving to discover the shore line, spurred her to new efforts. Leaving the lantern she gathered her cloak close about her and started for the stone house, this time taking the easier path by the Spring. She plunged into the gloom of the trees, floundering, trying to find some landmark that would assure her of the way. She came to a corner of the new building, veered off towards the brook, followed this to the basin where the healing water still steamed through the snow, sending off its acrid, sulphurous smell. She feared it! Groping among the snowy branches of the firs she found the path once more and slowly plodded up to the level above, and thus home. Pausing only to put a light in her chamber window and get another lantern she once more set out for the shore.

Her body trembled with weariness, but she pressed on, possessed with the thought that she might be helping him — her master — who was adrift there in the impalpable, whirling desert of snow. She found the heavy lantern already softly buried in a drift, shook off the snow, lighted it, and

this time succeeded in placing it securely upon its stand, turning the reflector towards the Lake. Its beams, which had seemed to her so powerful in the house, cast a feeble glimmer into the whirling dance of snowflakes.

Then she leaned against the post, weary and disheartened by her futile efforts to light the snowy world, listening to the fine flutter of the myriad flakes as they settled to rest. At her feet was the motionless water, — an inert, black mass into which the white particles drove down, as to a magnet, and at the touch were lost. The thing hypnotized her, — this incessant shower of white specks disappearing in the black gulf. It seemed for the moment symbolic of the whole spinning universe.

With an effort she wrenched her mind from this deadening contemplation, and again her thought went back to the boat struggling upon the water — to her husband. If he should be lost — if anything should happen to him ! It seemed inconceivable, as if some great force would be put out. Far away from her, out in the void of the dark storm, he appeared to her as this force, — a will that must exist and work its way. In spite of their intimacy, of his flaming love and worship of her, she felt herself a weak and a little thing compared with him. *His* must be a great end — and she was proud !

If anything should happen to him this night, she would be utterly alone in a dark world. Suddenly she felt totally isolated in the drifting snow, lost, and she was filled with dread. It was as if she had ventured alone with her lover to some remote end of the earth, and now he had left her. . . .

From this black consciousness she was aroused by a faint shout. She must have slept, she thought. Clinging to the

post she stared into the whirling atoms above her head, and slowly out of the darkness a bulky shadow loomed up. Soon she could make out the lines of the boat with its burden of snow-covered barrels and boxes, and then the figures of the two men rowing, and standing above them, large and commanding, her husband, his mackinaw coated with snow. As the boat grounded he leaped ashore and ran to her, catching her in his arms.

"You here! How long have you been waiting in the storm?" he asked in a hoarse, tremulous voice.

"I thought you might be dead," she whispered, "out there in the dark!"

He carried her up the path to the house, and placed her before the fire. He told her that the men were for staying at the Landing when the snow came on before they had finished loading the boat, but that he had insisted on setting out, knowing that she would be alone and might fear. They had made a slow journey back, feeling their way along the shore, bewildered by the storm, and if it had not been for the feeble glimmer from the reflector which he had detected through the swirling dance of snow, they would doubtless have drifted on into the open water of the upper Lake, and not found themselves until daylight and clear weather.

"Then I have been of use!" she sighed with satisfaction, clinging to him while the melting snow made pools on the hearth.

"Use!" he cried. "The light upon the path!" he chanted. "Meaning and end of life."

"No, not that," she said. "Just a servant with a light for her master."

"A servant!" he protested. . . .

"We are so much together, now," she murmured, falling to sleep in his arms. "There is nothing that can ever come between us, is there?"

"Nothing, in all the world!" her lover answered.

This peculiar sense of a close bond, intimacy and dependence, hung about her the next days while the snow continued to filter down upon the earth in its persistent, stealthy fashion. Now and then the wind would rise and swirl the flakes over the roof of the stone house like fine sand, but for the most part it fell quietly out of the gray sky, hour after hour. When Holden had to go to the camp below, she insisted upon making the trip with him. "I must do everything as you do it," she said. The camp was an eerie field of strange mounds and shapes. The laden boat drawn up on the shore was already a huge bank of snow. The men, snugly housed in one of the cabins, were contentedly lying beside the hot stove, smoking. As nothing could be done while the storm lasted, husband and wife ploughed their way back to their snowy nest. Holden got out a pair of snow-shoes he was making for his wife and went to work, while she cut moccasins from soft deer skin as he had taught her to do. The feeble daylight faded early. The doctor heaped more wood upon the fire. Now and then they looked up from their work and smiled at each other across the table, the same consciousness of peace and happiness in their isolation — solitude that was not loneliness — filling them both.

"How good it is!" she exclaimed.

"This is what I saw a year ago, when you were running about Europe and describing the Pyramids," he replied, and he told her a little of his lonely days spent in his cabin in the valley of the Seven Lakes, or here in a rough shelter tent while he was working on this stone house. She could see that for all his hermit nature — his love of the wilderness and remote places — manlike he had been lonely all his life, desiring his mate, longing to love. Now he was content.

"It has just begun," she murmured, caressing his rough neck with her soft hand. "There'll be months and months like this."

She understood now his apparent indifference at losing their friends. He saw in his imagination this quiet room, buried in the snows, as he had seen it really all his life. He wanted her alone, like this, with the egotism of the young male. He had carried her away from all the world for this! It was the sort of jealous passion that woman most realizes and which most satisfies her egotism, when it is fresh and full of poetic fervor. So as she caressed her Wild One, she dreamed of the long winter nights when they would be by themselves in complete intimacy, of the short days full of comradely duties. And she forgot the railroad man with his pleasant manner, little Dr. Percy, and all the people and things she had abandoned.

He laughed boyishly, as he threw aside the snow-shoes and took her in his arms.

"Not bad our life? . . . Content, eh, my little woman? . . . The less you have, the more you live — see!"

"When one loves," she added.

"Ah, when one loves —" . . .

They woke the next morning in a dazzling brilliance of light. Outside the world was marvellously transformed into a glowing, diamonded whiteness. The blue sky seemed almost black, and the black growth of spruce and fir on the hills was purple against the broad background of pure snow.

"It's like a thousand Christmases all at the same time!" Helen cried with the joy of a child, running from window to door to peer out into the new world.

Before they had their breakfast, Holden had to tie on her new snow-shoes, and they played in the snow that day like children, until he was obliged to go after the supplies left in the boat. That evening they arranged the last details of the winter order in their close quarters, placing barrels and boxes and tables where everything would be at hand and serviceable. At bedtime she was weary with the bustle and excitement of the day. When her husband went out to bring in the wood for the night, she followed him, and arm in arm they made their way to the cliff edge and stood there above the steep snowy precipice, looking down into the Lake, now silvered over with its first coat of ice. And beyond everything was the starry splendor of the northern night. The familiar hills seemed to have withdrawn, spacing the night majestically, in this broad wilderness. The silent earth! Save for a dot of firelight from the cabin below there was not a sign of human life in all the mysterious space beneath the stars. Men, like the animals, were hidden away in their warm burrows. Alone, the two looked forth upon the silent world.

Behind them the little stone house was covered with a thick white fur that curled over the low eaves to the wood-

pile, except where the windows were hollowed out like shining eyes.

"Could the world be more lovely or life richer!" the woman thought, holding tightly to the man, her heart beating joyously. "And it will be like this always, forever and ever — all our lives long, with him and with me. For we have found the one perfect thing on earth — complete love!"

Far out upon the Lake the fresh ice cracked, muffled reports shooting back and forth among the hills. She shivered as if a mocking voice had answered her exaltation. Her husband drew her closer, and led her within the warm house.

VII

So it went for a month and more, this wonderful playtime of the lovers in the snowy wilderness. Days seemed never to have been so full and glorious as these, and never again could such perfect ones come, bringing with them the same supernal glow of joy. To wander among the firs in the fine dry air, swept by the storms, was like breathing the ether of the gods. It fired mind and body to their fullest action. The young wife laughed and sang, danced in the snow, and teased her Wild One with a thousand tricks, like a sprite released from the dumb forest. They made skis and plunged over the cliff in wild glissades to the frozen Lake, and the doctor talked of contriving an ice-boat with which to explore the Lake.

"You'll have nothing to do all winter," she said after a month had passed with no call from outside. "Nobody can get sick here! They'll forget you, Healer, — you and your Spring and your miracles."

He smiled lazily, as she flung this back over her shoulder, and watched her lithe motions on the long smooth skis.

"If pure air and water and food could keep men well, the world would have been free from sickness long ago," he replied.

"What makes one well — what is the secret?" she asked lightly.

"To become like you!" he replied.

"How is that?"

"Adjusted to life — at peace with oneself," he said more gravely.

She paused in her flight, pondered, and then said: —

"I must be on the very pinnacle — poised at the summit of my being!"

"We both live on the heights. Come!"

They plunged over the cliff to the little cove beneath.

Late one afternoon in December their snowy paradise was invaded by a huge creature on snow-shoes. His fur cap was pulled over his face so that only his blond moustache, frozen into a piece of ice, was visible. He wore thick woollen leggings and had great leather mittens on his hands.

"What's the matter?" the doctor asked, hailing him.

"There's a man sick in a cabin over beyond the North Fork Carry — he's bad, too!"

Helen listened, with a sudden fear, as if the snowy hulk were a messenger from the outside sent by some malignant god to mar her perfect happiness. As her husband entered the house to make ready to go back with the man, she said: —

"You will take me with you?"

"It is too far," he replied. "And I may have to spend the night."

Nevertheless she tied on her snow-shoes.

"I'll go a little way," she said, "up the Lake."

So they set forth in single file on the white floor of the Lake, which was traced with the broad track that the messen-

ger had made. When they entered the woods at the head of the Lake, Helen was still at her husband's heels. He did not suggest that she turn back, and proud of her skill and endurance, she kept close to the men on the trail, weaving in and out over the cut-over land, by little frozen streams, under the laden branches of tall firs, until, as it became dusk, they reached the hut, loosely thrown together of dead logs, such as she had often come across in their wanderings through the woods — the temporary homes of those fatal green caterpillars that eat up the forests. She waited outside while the doctor was within. She could hear through the log wall the sharp staccato tones of the sick man, who seemed to be in delirium and mistook the doctor for some marauder. After a time the doctor came out, and binding on his snow-shoes, gave directions to the man who had brought him, then set out on the homeward trail, silently.

"Is he very ill?" she asked.

"He will die," the plodding figure ahead of her answered grimly.

"Can't you do anything for him?"

"Not now — it is too late. He's been lying there in fever ever since the storm last Wednesday, alone."

The white wilderness, it seemed, hid its tragedies in its silent depths. Without words they padded rhythmically over the frozen surface of the Lake. It was a wide white sea, in which they could distinguish merely the track just before their eyes. Suddenly out of the dusk the cliffs about the Cove loomed up ahead, and the light she had set in her bedroom when they left glimmered above them.

"To-morrow I must go over to the lumber company's

office at the Settlement," the doctor remarked. "They have no business to leave a man alone to die like a rat in his hole!"

She felt that the play days of unearthly beauty and joyous freedom were over. Even in the winter fastnesses of the north many strands of life bound the world together. . . .

Thereafter on the doctor's expeditions she went always, hardy and skilled. When he urged her to remain behind, for fear that the journey would be too long or that she would be compelled to spend the night in some uncomfortable camp, she begged to go, and mindful of that time when she had waited for him through the storm on the shore, he yielded.

They would go by sleigh or sledge, more often on skis or snow-shoes, over those winding trails that he seemed to divine instinctively beneath a fresh layer of snow, as the animals know their routes. They were silent journeys, with fur caps pulled down over their faces to protect them from the bitter blasts that swept the level surfaces, threatening to brush the human forms into the fantastic drifts. They plodded at a slow pace, she close behind his bulky figure, taking his ample track with her smaller shoe. In these silent journeys through the dark forests, over the glittering hills, the woman was nearer the man, even than during the fire-lighted evenings in her home or the silent nights in her chamber, with the winds whirling the drifted snow over their refuge. Thus following in his footsteps through the unbroken wastes, she seemed to herself part of his will, his purpose, and was content to be so, not questioning the journey's end, the worth of his purpose, — content to see his broad gray shoulders in the old mackinaw, his

worn skin cap pulled close over his head, — proud of his steady stride, relying absolutely upon his sure instinct for the untrodden road.

Once they were tried in an adventure that came near disaster. In making the round of certain lumber camps above the third carry, they had been delayed, and as the wan sunshine of the February day faded into a sullen grayness they found themselves a long distance from home. They had started that morning at sunrise, and in spite of intervals of rest and one ride in a sledge, she was unexpectedly weary when finally they turned to face the home-ward journey. The camp boss at the last stop urged them to spend the night there.

“It’ll likely snow before you reach the Lake,” he said.

“Do you want to?” her husband asked her, and though she was weary, knowing his desire to get back to his home, not much inclined herself to spend a night in an ill-ventilated lumber cabin, she said blithely: —

“Oh, we can do it in a few hours — you said there was a short cut over the mountain to the Lake.”

“Through the valley of the Seven Lakes,” he said, nodding. And with another glance at the graying dusk they set out. Already before they reached the fork in the path the snow had begun to fall desultorily, a few small flakes sifting out of the chill heavens. With another look at the dull spot of light in the sky where the sun was, and a glance about the narrow valley with its ice-bound brook, as if to reassure himself of old landmarks, the doctor started on. Their way led now up the brook, which was heavily covered with branching firs that kept out all light. The snow fell more

steadily, filtering in through the branches, clogging their shoes.

For the first time, she found it difficult to keep up with her husband's long stride. It seemed to her that he was forcing the pace, always looking about anxiously for marks whenever the trees opened enough to admit more of the uncertain twilight. The going was rougher now, and over fallen timber that concealed deep holes. She fell once, but suppressing the instinctive cry for help extricated herself. Her husband was almost out of sight in the forest gloom when she got on her feet, — she hurried on !

They came out upon the summit of a steep hill where through a draw the wind had swept the earth bare. Holden had paused and was peering into the thick falling snow, as if he expected to find something, then shook his head.

“Come !” he said sharply. “We must try it, any way !”

She rose wearily from the snow-drift into which she had sunk, and pushed on. Her heart beat loudly and her breath choked her. Would this wracking journey through the white snow never end ? For the first time it seemed to her that her husband had forgotten her, was unmindful of her weakness ; with set teeth she followed on doggedly, determined that the cry of woman's feebleness should not call his attention to her.

Already he had plunged down the steep descent, half sliding, slipping, and stood waiting at the bottom. She let herself slide, careless of rock and tree, and rolled to the bottom. As she floundered to her feet she heard him say hoarsely : —

"It looks as if there were a lake here — we must make better time!" He disappeared into the shadow caused by the curtain of falling snow. The separation of a few feet made his figure vague, distant. The ground was more level above the ice, but the footing was softer. And through this thick, powdery substance that clogged her feet she followed in what seemed to her an interminable nightmare. She strove to keep the vaguely looming form ahead of her within sight, to overtake it so that she might cry out, to save herself from falling. It was a trackless sea of snow, silent, boundless, — nothing before or behind but a gray curtain of fine snow. At long intervals her husband paused to glance sharply at the dull band of light behind them, which was supposed to be the west. Soon even this doubtful radiance sank into the universal grayness of the storm. The heavy footprints of the man's shoes sifted full at once, blurring the track. She made another desperate effort to keep the mechanical motion of her feet in his long track. It was almost dark. Gradually the pain subsided, the acute sensation of weariness and the sharp desire for the end. There would be no end! They would go on like this all night, forever, mechanically moving through the white waste. The vague figure ahead became to her colossal, fantastically snow-encrusted. She knew that it was her husband, felt his presence rather than saw him. At last she was no longer conscious of this presence — she was alone! With a little cry she sank to the soft floor in a heap. . . .

When her eyes opened, her husband was holding her in his arms, chafing her face with his bare hands.

"No more," she whispered, "I can't do more!"

The particles of snow stung her eyes and face like hot steel. Without a word Holden took her in his arms, resting her on his shoulder, and carried her what seemed to her numb senses a long way, then laid her upon a soft bed. A branch dropped its burden of snow upon her bare face, and so she knew that she was not in her bed, as she had thought; but they must have left that trackless waste, were now in the shelter of the trees. Her husband was busily digging with a snow-shoe and tramping down the loose snow all about the hole that he made. Soon he had a fire going, and when she lazily opened her eyes again she could see the great black trunks of the protecting spruces, and the sheltering branches above her head.

"All right?" he asked, perceiving her open eyes. "We'll stay the night here."

"Yes," she murmured, again closing her eyes, content, but vaguely conscious of having proved inadequate. It was good to lie there upon the soft bed of snow, while the fire slowly sputtered and crackled into life. She was willing to lie there forever without another effort, even though the snow should drift down faster and faster over her warm body, covering her in the burrow that her husband had made for her. Why had this terrible lassitude come over her? Inadequate—the woman! Never a mate for a man—always falling in his wake helpless. In this drowsy half-consciousness she was dimly aware of the man sitting hunched up on his ankles with a white drift behind him, crouching over the fire, feeding it with branches of dry wood. He seemed thinner, more gaunt than she remembered, slighter than the figure she had followed all these hours. Then as she fell asleep she saw merely

the wide white sea of snow and herself a lonely figure, plodding over it. . . .

At daylight her eyes opened upon her husband, seated as she had dreamed the night before, crouched upon his ankles, his head fallen forward on his arms, asleep. The dead ashes of the fire lay between them. He had taken off his thick mackinaw and wrapped it about her body and head.

"Eric!" she called, and he started, confused.

"I must have fallen asleep."

He shook himself, thrashing his numbed arms, and blew the fire into flame.

"Luckily," he said, looking up to the cloudless sky, "it has stopped snowing, or we might stay here until we starved — I have no idea where we are!"

After they had warmed themselves and thawed out their snow-shoes, they left their hole beneath the snow-laden trees and ploughed their way back to the Lake. On its smooth surface they could see the faint, sunken, irregular line which indicated their circling course of the night before. Holden, after carefully scanning it, said: —

"We must have come back a good way on our track."

"Do you know where we are?"

"The upper reach of Fallon Sound; I know it well — I used to live over there behind that hill."

"I don't recognize the place," she said, glancing at the unfamiliar hills about the Lake.

"You have never been here before."

She remembered then that whenever in their expeditions she had asked him to take her to the valley of the Seven Lakes and show her where he had once lived, he had always put her off, saying merely: —

"It's a dreary place — an evil place. I never want to see it again!" Surmising that it held bitter memories of struggle and defeat, she had not pressed him. She herself liked the bright places of life, quickly turned her back upon gloomy spots where there was no joy. . . . So in this chill, dreary morning after the storm she merely glanced at the unfamiliar scene, with desire to hasten to her own warm nest.

"Can you walk?" he asked. "It is not far now, and we had best get over the Lake before the snow softens."

She moved stiffly, dragging her legs as if they were weighted. All her suppleness of limb, her elasticity of youth, seemed to have left her overnight. She was an inert and numb creature.

"It's been too much for you!" he cried reproachfully, putting his arm beneath hers to steady her.

"Something's the matter with me — there's no strength left in me!"

Tears started in her eyes.

"We'll take it slowly — it's only a short way."

Nevertheless the journey in the dazzling brilliance of the cloudless morning over the level floor of the Lake seemed endless. They plodded slowly, his arm sustaining hers, pausing now and then to breathe the sharp air, to wipe the perspiration from their faces. The gentle breeze sweeping up from the southwest caught little wisps of snow from the flat surface and dashed it in their faces.

When at last they reached the stone house in the cliff, she threw herself upon the couch before the hearth, utterly exhausted, while he made the fire and got some food ready.

"My play days are over," she murmured to herself sadly.
"Something has happened to me."

And in a little while she knew what had overtaken her. She was to have a child. The first languorous inactivity, announcing the peculiar preoccupation of her body, had come upon her out on the frozen Lake, in the sea of whirling snow. A child — that was an event that she had not reckoned upon !

VIII

WINTER held on steadily for another six weeks, well into April. All this time the young wife was housed for the most part,—moving from her chamber to the larger room and back again, or lying through stormy days on the deerskin couch before the fire. Her mirthful laugh, like a child's, still rang out at times, and her playful interest in all the little happenings about the storm-bound cabin was as lively as ever. But she moved languidly, and seemed to have lost that sparkling zest in living that had made the first months of her marriage like a revelation of superhuman existence. The lassitude which had overtaken her on the snow-field, the night when her strength and courage failed her for the first time, slowly increased, imperceptibly altering her life, changing her mood, dividing her more and more from her husband,—the man, who was not subject to these disabilities.

At first her husband spent all his time with her in the big room, working at his bench with his tools, reading, or silently meditating before the fire. But as the winter wore away in a succession of fierce storms, he was summoned to attend the sick scattered through the camps in the lonely region. It had been a healthy season, but now at the close of winter, after months in the rough cabins, men were falling ill. And as the lumbermen and the miners drifted back into

the Settlement to spend their season's wages in fierce dissipation sickness broke out there also. The doctor was in constant demand. Helen, often left by herself for hours, far into the night, resented these calls. She felt secretly hurt at his willingness to make long, tiresome journeys, his readiness to bind on his snow-shoes and set forth even in storm or at night, whenever he was called. Slaving for ignorant people who could do nothing for him and who repaid his services, if at all, meagrely! She would think of this and try to explain the Wild One to herself.

"He is good," she would say. "That is why he likes to give himself." But that did not account wholly for his actions. The saint in her Wild One was hardly apparent.

"He is proud of his skill," she would say. "It pleases him to feel how much he is needed by these helpless people." Nor would that satisfy her reason. Why should he care to spend his power on these ignorant creatures when he might more profitably exercise it among his equals?

"He is restless," she said, waiting for him in the dreary, gray light. "Like a man he must be doing something always—needs excitement, adventure." Once *she* had been his excitement, his great venture! She was jealous of the work that took him from her shrine,—as the woman always must be until she has her own work and becomes adjusted to her own world.

She needed her man now more than ever, and her sense of ownership in him awakening she begrudging his spending himself on anything but her. She bethought herself how she might beguile him on his return, make him laugh, cling to him, bind him closer to her. . . .

One sunny afternoon, announcing the coming end of winter, they had gone to the Spring, and Holden had opened the new camp-hospital to air the building after the winter. As yet it had never been occupied, no occasion for its use having arisen. Then they had gone to one of the old cabins which the doctor used for storeroom and workroom. He was building a new boat, and she liked to sit in the sunny doorway, idle and dreaming, watching the man's sinewy arms bend the thin strips of cedar about the slim ribs. A pleasant aromatic odor came from the shavings on the floor. She saw a man coming up the beaten path from the snowy Lake. He stumbled and reeled, then with difficulty recovered himself. She thought he must be drunk.

"Eric!" she called to her husband in a low tone. "Come here!"

Holden came to the door, gave one sharp glance at the man, who was advancing with painful effort, unseeing, as if he were using all the powers of a dazed mind to keep himself upright in the path, then sprang forwards and caught the reeling figure in his arms. Dragging him into the cabin he laid him upon the fresh shavings. "He's in a high fever!" the doctor said; "call Jack." The old man could not be found; so she herself was forced to help her husband carry the sick man over to the new building, and then undress him and get him into bed. The man kept moaning deliriously, trying to explain in a thick, broken speech his trouble.

All through the coming months of her pregnancy the young wife never forgot the disagreeable impression of the bloodshot eyes, the red skin, the hairy face, — the dirt and the squalor of the stranger. This delirious creature, uncouth, uncared

for, seemed to her the very symbol of Sickness and Evil—all that was loathsome! She shuddered, and when the task was done fled back to her little nest, and there her husband found her when he came up at dark. She did not see the light in his eyes, his eagerness, as she asked impatiently:—

“How is that dreadful creature?”

Her husband’s face quickly changed, and his tone had in it something hard as he answered:—

“He is a very sick man. Pneumonia—both lungs. That ‘dreadful creature’ has walked, delirious, all the way from the railroad camp at the Rapids—fourteen miles—to get to me—to get help!”

“Why did they let him do it?”

The doctor shrugged his shoulders.

“He’s an Italian—must have heard of this place and escaped somehow—they don’t look after sick men in a railroad construction camp.”

“They ought to have their own doctor,” she observed pettishly, vaguely irritated with the disturbance the sick man had created in what had promised to be a beautiful day.

“But they don’t!” he said shortly. . . .

That evening the wife was to come closer to an understanding of her husband than before. After eating his supper the doctor went back to his new patient, and she waited for him with growing unrest. When he came in his face seemed fired, as she had seen it at rare moments,—when they had been together on the slope of Macatawa in the dawn, the night they had first entered this new home together. Unconsciously she resented the fact that anything outside

of herself had the power to bring that light into his eyes. What exalted him now, she said to herself, was mere egotism, pride. The idea that this fever-stricken creature sought him in his great need, as the stray particle of steel seeks the magnet, with an unconscious compulsion of necessity, pleased him. The blind instinct of faith in help to be got that drew this forlorn being — ignorant even of the language — across all those snowy miles to fall into his arms at the end fed his pride. It was like the running of the waters to the lake, the turning of the child to the parent, — Faith that compelled deeds !

And the inner need to justify this faith — to exert his power — burned in the man's eyes, exalted him — as he was to-night.

She said half mockingly: —

“So at last your fine new building is to have an occupant ?”

“Yes !” he cried buoyantly, striding back and forth as was his wont in moments of mental excitement. “I knew it would be needed. . . . This is but the first — there will be many others !”

“Do you mean to spend all your life here, looking after lumber jacks and section hands ?”

She spoke with an impulsive directness that was unconscious of brutality. The still cold voice in which he answered her frightened her.

“And why not ? The lumber jack and the section hand seem to need me — as much as Elport or —”

“Me !” she supplied bitterly.

“You do not understand this thing,” he said, controlling himself, as with a child. “Any one who needs my help, who

seeks me here in the woods, shall have it freely. That is why I live as I do — that I may be able to give myself — and not sell myself for money, as I should be compelled to do if I lived in the world. I am free! . . . I will make the old magic come back once more to the Spring — I will heal!"

For the time her querulous, jealous woman's heart was stilled. She was awed by the outburst she had provoked, by the sight of hidden fires within her Wild One.

IX

THE fever-stricken Italian was but the first case in the hospital, the first victim of an epidemic. After the healthy, cold winter, as the wet weather set in, more cases of pneumonia broke out in the district. It seemed, also, as if a malignant seed of disease, bred among the crowded settlements of men, when carried by chance into the wide-spaced wilderness, fastened upon its new victims with increased virulence. The open land of forest and lake was no barrier against disease. Wherever a little group of lumbermen, a camp of half-breed hunters or of railroad laborers existed, the fever found its way. The men, large and apparently hardy, sleeping in crowded, overheated quarters, breathing foul air, eating coarse, often bad food, became soft victims to the contagion. Whole camps were prostrated by the same disease.

By the end of April the new hospital was crowded with eight cots, and the old cabins were reopened. New patients were brought in from distant camps in sledges drawn by men. It was no longer possible for the doctor, with Gray Jack's help, to attend so many, and a couple of nurses were got from the nuns at St. Anne's. Helen could see the gray-clothed women with their huge white caps, moving in and out among the bare trees below.

Holden worked hard night and day, making long journeys

to visit the more remote camps in the region. At last the work passed even his powers of stern endurance: the sick lay helpless, alone, in their remote corners. One night when he returned after nightfall, haggard and weary, he said to his wife:—

“I have sent for the young pup to come up here and help me.”

“Dr. Percy!” she exclaimed.

“Yes,” he replied irritably. “Somebody must be here when I am called away. . . . Maybe he will not come, but if he has the right stuff in him he will grasp the chance.”

Helen, with a vision of the popular young doctor caught in the pleasant meshes of city life, doubted if he would respond to the call for help from the woods at this season of the year. But she misjudged him. He arrived, together with the telegram announcing his departure, much befurred and be-wrapped, looking pale and exotic in his city clothes. These he quickly threw off and plunged into the abundant work that offered. After the night of his arrival Helen saw him only in the distance, like the nuns from St. Anne’s, walking swiftly to and fro along the snowy paths of the camp below. His coming seemed to please her husband greatly.

“The pup has the making of a man in him after all,” he said. “He was born to do another man’s bidding — to be a faithful servant.”

And that she judged was what her husband wanted.

Meanwhile the wife was laid to one side, out of all this man’s work, quietly housed upon her cliff. At first she made feeble efforts to get about, to go down to the busy camp, but her husband chided her for her recklessness with the new life in

her. Now, more than ever, he seemed to set her apart in her shrine, to keep her untouched, unharmed, removed from the stress and the dangers of life.

And she was content to yield, to idle long hours before the glowing fire. Rarely, on calm days, when between storms the sun lay warm upon the banked snow and the wind was still, she ventured out into her garden and sat there, looking forth upon the frozen Lake, over which the freighters still ploughed their way, — then went back to her cabin and her warm fire, to doze and dream of the past.

The new life that had begun unawares within her seemed to establish gradually a cleavage between her and her husband — between her new self and the old. Those glorious days after the first storm when she and her lover were living alone at the top of the snowy world, in joyous freedom and isolation, were far, far away, — sunk behind the horizon of time in some other dream life. The child to be, strangely enough, brought her back to that other existence, which had been before she met her Wild One — to the girl of Suburbia. As it grew within her it vivified old instincts and longings, old habits and beliefs, while the strange intervening period of passion and love sank out of sight, — forever !

Thus drawn by the irresistible cords of the awakening past, she wrote to her mother, telling her of the child that was to be. Her mother's reply, which came with unexpected promptness, aroused strange feelings. There had never been strong love between mother and daughter. Impatience and revolt had been the prevailing mood. But now the fact of common womanhood seemingly awoke a latent love.

Mrs. Goodnow wrote wanderingly and querulously — it

was her first word since the family cataclysm — and between the lines there was much ill-concealed reproach. Nevertheless, she was interested and concerned, and closed with an urgent invitation for her daughter to come home.

“How can you be comfortable in that sort of place!” the lady wailed. “You must come home, the sooner the better. . . . Nora is engaged to Alfred Farlow, a promising young man in your uncle’s office. They will be married in June. Come in time for the wedding.”

So Nora, — little black-haired Nora, impish and boyish, — had grown in a year to her own woman’s estate! . . . The letter, on the whole, though it complained much, was quieter than she had expected, and more broken. And suddenly she felt a great desire to see once more the large, comfortable, easy house in the city suburb, with its accustomed order and comfort. . . .

Another letter from Vera, who was now married, confirmed the impression her mother’s letter had given her. “I think you ought to see your mother,” it said bluntly; “she has changed. Nora’s engagement has pleased her — he’s a nice boy, and is doing very well, I hear. I think he will make little Nora an excellent husband if he can satisfy her ambitions.”

So little Nora had ambitions! That was what she herself had lacked — ambitions. Apparently Vera had ambitions, and lively ones, of which thus far she had been disappointed. The young diplomat had failed to secure the expected promotion to London — had failed even of Berlin and Rome. He would have to content himself with Portugal or “one of those South American states that are worse than your

wilderness." Vera explained pessimistically, "Politics in our country is still very crude. A well-equipped man like Gerald has really no chance against some common little millionaire. We believed there was a change for the better latterly, but it does not seem so. I want Gerald to resign from the service, but he is hardly fitted for business life — and in America there is nothing else for a man!"

Vera's ambitions, it seemed, were not giving her satisfaction. Helen thought of her own little bare stone house, the busy hospital camp below, and smiled with a sense of the disparity in things.

That night she spoke to her husband of her mother's letter. When she mentioned casually the invitation for her to return to her home for the child's coming, Holden took the pipe from his lips and looked at his wife steadily out of his sunken eyes. Under this close examination she moved uneasily.

"That means you want to go back there and have your child in your mother's house?" he demanded at last in a toneless voice.

She had not admitted it yet to herself, and it seemed harsh for him to press her thus bluntly to a decision, and not to recognize the woman's natural desire for the conventional, the usual at such a crisis in her life.

"Not if — if —" she stammered, "if you don't want it! But it might be easier," she concluded weakly.

"But you want to go back," he asserted in the same dry tone.

"No!" she exclaimed, lying to herself; "that is, not to leave you — but why can't you come with me?"

"Leave here now!" he muttered, rising and turning away from her.

It was like the suggestion to an officer to leave the battle at its crisis, to run from his work at the whim of a woman. He lighted his lantern preparatory to going back to the Spring for his evening visit.

"You don't seem to need me!" she cried impatiently. "All you need is your sick."

He looked at her enigmatically, then pushed open the door and without a word departed. She watched the wavering glimmer of his lantern along the steep path. Why had he not given her one caress, a touch of the hand, to assure her that she was still his first desire and need? "I'm so homely now," she said with a sigh, looking at her shapeless figure. "It is always so with men!". . .

The rising sun came into her window these mornings, and she awoke at the first touch of golden light. Turning she found that she was alone, and with a start of sudden fear rose and looked into the living room. There on the lounge before the dead fire her husband lay sleeping. He had come in late, and as was often the case when she was asleep, had thrown himself down before the fire in order not to disturb her. She looked at him as he lay unconscious, scarcely breathing, his lower jaw firmly closed under his moustache, his thin face worn from the hard labor of the past weeks. There was something mysterious in this man so near her, so intimately hers, yet so strange and hidden in his being. As she watched him in his deep sleep, a feeling akin to fear came over her, as if he were an unknown force that might strike her and cause her pain, — and also the child she held within

her, — the children ! He was still the untamed man of the wilds, and now she wondered at her courage in loving him, in abandoning her people to follow him. . . . Throw-ing a cloak over herself she moved noiselessly to the door and opened it. All outside was still and golden in the first dawn. She stayed thus on the threshold, wondering, undecided, half wishing to flee through the dark woods from the sleeping man, to escape ! She made a step forwards, then paused. Suddenly she felt an arm about her, drawing her back, and looked up frightened into her husband's face.

"You must not stay out in the cold like this !" he ex-claimed, sleepily. "What are you doing, love ?"

He drew her to him and kissed her. She followed him into the room and waited while he lighted the fire.

"You were trying to run away," he said whimsically.

She shivered as if the cold of the dawn had chilled her, and made no reply.

"But I shan't let you," he added, with an odd smile. "I've captured you for life."

And that day when she was alone she wrote her mother,

"I can't leave my husband, and he will not go with me. . . . Why don't you take the Colonel's camp for the summer ? It is very near us, you remember."

X

AFTER a long, driving rain, during which the snowy earth and the stiff trees seemed to relax, the winter broke up. A week of unusually warm weather completed the seasonal change, driving the snow-line far up on the flank of Macatawa and stripping the ground of its white blanket except in the deeper gulfs of the dark forest. A drab coat of old ice still bound the Lake, but it was rotten and unsafe for travel, groaning and quaking nights and mornings as if in throes of inner dissolution. . . .

The doctor's young wife, lying in the sunshine with her casement window wide open, could see a flock of large birds, wheeling in circles above the gray lake, as if waiting for the ice to part and reveal their food. They had come mysteriously overnight from the southland, where spring was already established. The doctor had marshalled his little band of invalids along the sandy shore of the Cove where they might feel the sunshine and breathe the breath of spring. They lay there inert, bundled up in all sorts of ragged attire, — tattered blankets, old mackinaws, fur coats. They were bloodless, unshaved, uncouth figures.

“What a lot of wretched beggars!” the young woman thought, with the unconscious contempt of her thrifty race. “And Eric fusses over them as he never did with Mr. Elport!”

She could see her husband below, bending over one of his patients, giving him some medicine. She turned impatiently from the sight and looked out once more to the open lake, where the white gulls wheeled and called complainingly. Thoughts drifted idly across her mind as she lay there in the sunlight, looking at the gulls, — thoughts alien to the Healing Spring. Why did Eric waste his great gift here ! He was too good an instrument for the trivial task he had chosen. There were many others, like Percy or even less, who could do this task adequately enough. If it were in a great city hospital, with its opportunities and connections, that would be a very different thing. The most famous doctors, she had heard, worked in the hospitals, and whenever they were accused of charging exorbitantly for their services to the rich defended themselves by citing their charity work in the hospitals. That was the sensible thing to do, — like other people. Her mood these days contained an unformulated criticism of the unconventional, the unusual. What men had always done, what they usually felt and thought, — that must be the reasonable way of thinking, feeling, doing. . . .

After another brief storm the ice went out from the Lake, suddenly, swiftly, almost silently. She awoke one morning to find the blue, dimpling water she loved, in place of the gray ice floor. The disappearance of the ice was another promise of the awakening spring, another prophecy of the summer to come, when there would be people, and the Lake would be gay with white sails and pretty canoes creeping along the shores. She sang that morning — first time for many days — and when Eric looked at her inquiringly she could not

tell him why. In her heart she felt that with the going of the ice a prison door had been swung open.

The day after the ice went out the boat was sent to the Settlement for the mail and supplies, of which they had been deprived while the ice was unsafe for travel. Dr. Percy brought the letters to the stone house that afternoon on his return and stayed to chat, sitting at his ease on the threshold of the open door. He was bubbling over with news, the gossip of the Settlement. Trains were coming in now, it seemed, — irregularly, but the first of June a daily service would begin.

“Gee ! But it was good to see an engine and choo-choo cars ; funny, though, in the old Settlement, where the tree trunks still stand in the streets. The old flat cars gave you a feeling of the pavement. Not so far from Broadway, after all, eh ?”

The fat little doctor’s eyes glistened with the city man’s irresistible appetite for the flesh-pots and the movement of feet. The young wife smiled sympathetically. She must go over some day and see the marvellous train of cars. The railroad would tempt him away ? But the little man shook his head positively.

“Not yet ! It is too exciting working with the doctor. He puts a meaning into things.” . . . Gold had been discovered up north the previous autumn, and the lumbermen coming in from the Temisko district had brought the news. He might run off for a time and stake a claim. That would be exciting, — big sport ! And if he struck it ? “Well, me for Europe and the grand tour, then ! No more pill giving,” he laughed boyishly.

Meantime there was unwonted activity at the Settlement, — the stir of a new life. Two new hotels had been started, — one "whopper" in brick ! Blakeville, you must call the town, please — no longer just the "Settlement." It would be the outfitting station and point of departure for the mines. The railroad had come at the dramatic moment.

"And won't it all jar the doctor !" the young man concluded. Both laughed, and Dr. Percy went on more seriously, "But he can't help himself. It's no good burying your head in your blanket and refusing to see light. As old Elport told him, this was bound to come, — the opening up of the country, settlers, and all the rest. The gold has just hurried it up, — that's all. And the doctor'll get used to it. It'll bring big things to him, too. I only wish I had his chance !"

"What chance ?" the young wife asked eagerly.

"Oh, to make a place for myself in the world, — a smashing big reputation !"

"Here ?"

"Yes, why not ?" he replied easily. "The Paynter brothers did it, 'way off in Wisconsin — brought people from all over the world to them. Abdominal surgery, you know. And there was Lawton in Colorado — consumption. And Lingard over in Switzerland, — nervous diseases, — and Zumpf in Austria — some little bit of a village, I can't remember what they call it. But everybody knows Zumpf's work on diseases of the spinal cord."

He added other instances of famous medical men who had established their cures at remote places, and brought the sick to them from all parts of the world.

"These days," he explained, "people like to run about, if they have the money and an excuse. They'll go thousands of miles for a good thing. All you need is to have the goods, or make them think you have!" he added with an easy cynicism. "And the doctor *has* the goods all right. I hope he'll go in for nervous diseases — that's the rich field nowadays. Oh, he might take rheumatics, diabetes, digestive disorders, too. The Spring would help him there. But he's got personality, and that's what counts in modern therapy, as in everything else."

The young doctor warmed with enthusiasm for his subject, painting for the wife the golden opportunities that lay in the Healing Spring, once its fame had become spread abroad and the fame of her Healer. All of which the little doctor seemed to think was inevitable, a matter of only a very few years.

"Why, talk about gold mines — the doctor's got one here right under his hand in this outfit!" He pointed to the Spring carelessly. "Of course he'll have to fix things up a good bit, — build cottages, a bath house, a place for the nurses, and all that. Something rustic and simple, but comfortable, you know. And he'll have to get rid of his half-breeds and lumber jacks. . . . It's a gold mine," he repeated. "Elport saw it, and he has a good head."

"But," the wife protested, "you know the doctor — he would never consent to dismiss the ragged regiment, as he calls them. Besides, it will take money to build."

The little doctor laughed.

"We know he's nutty about some things, — all great men are, ain't they? Obstinate — wants to run a sort of phal-

anstery, where any beggar can come and get his cure free. Idealistic, poetic, philanthropic, and all that! But it don't work — he'll learn."

Helen shook her head dubiously.

"He can't help himself! And he won't want to when he gets started. He'll need some money to put up his buildings, and the only way to get it is to make it or borrow it, isn't that so?"

Then with lowered voice, as if he were taking the wife into a conspiracy, he said:—

"I've started it already, — written to some men I know, told 'em what a wonder Holden is, — the sort of camp we are running, and all that. Just friendly letters, you know. But I got some bites, — inquiries, to-day. You know those city doctors have a lot of cases they don't know what to do with, — rich people who can't get well and are always looking around for something new to try. The doctors become tired of them and like to pass them on. Then some day, perhaps, one of these old rounders gets well, — or thinks he does, — say it was up here under the doctor's care? He puts it all down to the last thing. Then the trick's done! He goes away and talks about his cure — and other lame ducks flock in here. Elport, you can bet, has been doing a lot of talking this winter, and he talks to just the right crowd, — worn-out business men, the big fellows, who have knocked out their digestions and are getting old and don't know what is coming to them. You'll see things happen this summer, Mrs. Holden!"

Helen laughed at his exuberant picture.

"But you've been describing just the ordinary sanitarium,

and you know what the doctor thinks of sanitariums and the doctors who run them. He calls them 'birds of prey,' 'fakirs,' 'bandits'!"

Dr. Percy nodded his head wisely.

"This'll be different — just as the doctor is different. He'll keep the fake out."

"He is different," the young wife agreed proudly.

The little doctor raised a pudgy hand impressively.

"Don't I know that? I've watched 'em, — big doctors at the hospitals and in the medical schools, here and abroad. The ones that know all the best tricks, all the up-to-date serums, treatments, cures; but they can't touch our doctor! It isn't what he knows — though considering how he's buried himself here in the woods these last years, he knows a wonderful lot, more'n you possibly suspect. But it's different from knowing, what he has. There are many knowing ones in the profesh, and they're no particular good either, when it comes to making people well."

"What is it?"

"You know what the people around here call him?"

"The Healer!"

"That's it! . . . He understands bodies by some sixth sense we haven't any of us got, — sees what we could never find out with our five, — and then he cures — he really makes folks well! Why, we had cases this last month of double pneumonia that would have died in any city hospital — and they are almost well."

"Perhaps it's magic," the young wife suggested lightly.

"It is a kind of magic — like any other big gift. It's more than medicine. It's will — pure will!"

He paused to mop his brow.

"Only one death in thirty, and some of the toughest cases I ever saw —"

His voice fell as he saw Holden approaching at a rapid pace.

"I'm off," the doctor called out. "The ice is out in the upper lake, and I can get to Point Barrow in the canoe. Jack will help me paddle — you must stay here, Percy, and look after things. . . . Those Frenchies up there must be in a bad way after being cut off for a month."

He hastily made the few preparations that he needed for his expeditions. He looked worn, after all these weeks of hard labor, but he was alert and happy, fully alive with the light in his eyes that Helen knew so well. She watched the two men go down the path to the Cove, talking eagerly, and she envied them their work, their freedom. More and more she had become tied, womanwise, and knew that she would never more be her Wild One's complete mate. Like many a modern civilized woman she questioned the order of nature: she did not wish to become a mother. She resented the handicap of her sex!

The little doctor's words, his boundless faith in her husband, and admiration for him, set her to dreaming once more of him and his great gift. Theirs, she mused, must be an unusual life, — possibly centred here about the Healing Spring as Dr. Percy had pictured it — for the present. Only for the present, however, for subtle currents had started in her brain coincident with her motherhood, curiously atavistic instincts that pointed back to the accepted paths of her race. But before her Wild One was thoroughly broken to modern harness there would be storms, she knew. He was not like

other men. Of that she was proud, as a woman who had mated herself to him. Of that she was sure. Elport, the practical and worldly, as well as Percy, the material and earthly, both believed in the magic of the gift. . . . Thus she dreamed on in her waiting moments, alone in the little gray stone cabin that her lover had built for her.

XI

WITH the final breaking up of the long winter new activities sprang at once into being, overnight it seemed, as the buds swelled on the trees and the blades of grass pushed out upon the gray hillsides. First came the long procession of logs, the winter's cut, flooded out of all the little streams into the great Lake, rafted thence in dark patches, like marquetry, past the Settlement to the flume at the head of the river, through which they disappeared into the broiling rapids and thundered down the turbulent reaches to the mills below. There were a few days when it seemed to the doctor's wife, looking down from her perch on the cliff, that she might almost walk across the Lake to the Settlement on a solid floor of brown spruce logs.

After the logs came the prospectors, pushing up the Lake with their camp outfits towing out behind them, in steam launch and motor-boat, even in canoes with half-breed Indians at the paddle, rushing hungrily to get into the wilderness where gold had been found. And lastly the construction camp of the new railroad was moved up from below and pitched just across the Lake, north of the Settlement. There was to be no pause in its march northwards. Holden called it the caterpillar, which grew on what it fed and reached forth for more, slowly dragging its fat body over the devastated land.

One beautiful day at the end of May when nature was taking a brave leap forwards towards summer, Horace Elport arrived, his launch panting noisily into the Cove. He leaped out briskly upon the sandy shore, and his shout brought the two doctors from their work.

"Here's your invalid!" he announced, doubling a firm fist and striking the doctor robustly. "I've obeyed orders — renounced the pleasures of life, and most of the pomps and vanities. Promising sample of your handiwork, eh?"

And, indeed, though he was thin and pale, he was alert and buoyant, looked fit for new conquests as he proclaimed himself.

"I came in on my own car over my own road, as I told you I would, and I'm going on, too!" He turned to Holden with a challenging twinkle in his pleasant eyes. "Still hate the choo-choo cars as much as ever, doctor? You old fogey, mossback, hermit — with your Spring! Come on up north with me — I'm going into the gold camps and farther!"

He bubbled on in irresistible good humor, an arm linked to either of the doctors. Perceiving the new hospital, with its open windows and the patients sunning themselves on the broad uncovered porches, he shook his fist at it boyishly.

"Many's the day last summer I'd like to have put dynamite under those walls, and gone fishing instead!" he cried. "But I see you are using it — doing a good business, my hermit?"

Holden smiled grimly.

"*Your* business, Elport," he retorted. "The contractor at your railroad camp runs a place too filthy for beasts, and

this spring the men all got sick. Not a medicine, not a doctor — you people ought to go to jail for keeping such a joint ! Lucky I was here !”

“My dear man,” Elport replied tranquilly to the charge, “I’m not responsible for the way Callahan and O’Rouke run their construction camps. But I’ll see old Callahan and make him put in a medical outfit. . . . All the same it gave you something to do — kept your hand in the game.”

He stopped at the tap for the spring water and drew a cup, which he tasted with a wry face.

“Same old Burgundy,” he observed. “Don’t need any magic now, thank God ! But, doctor, I’ve brought a friend with me, Jimmy Eaton.”

Little Dr. Percy dropped behind the others and winked broadly at the doctor’s wife, who had joined the group.

“Fine fellow as ever was, but he’s knocked out, tired of life, and all that — and talks a dreadful lot about it. . . . I brought him along in the car with me. I told him you could make him as fit as ever, doctor !”

He turned quickly on Holden, who had begun to scowl suspiciously.

“And you will, doctor ?”

“I’ll look him over,” Holden grumbled in reply.

Helen’s heart fluttered with excitement. So it had begun — what Percy had predicted, what she had longed for more than she knew — success ! . . .

The railroad man, who had a quick eye for detail, observed the foundation stone gathered for a new building.

“The bath-house you were talking about ?”

“Yes, for sweat baths,” Holden explained, “to take the

place of the old Indian tepees. That's what they used the Healing Spring for, chiefly."

"But it's too small! You'll be doing a lot of building here soon — get the fever like the rest of us across the Lake. You ought to put some cottages over there under the trees —" He pointed to an opening in the woods on the farther side of the glade.

Again Dr. Percy winked at the doctor's wife. She felt delightfully that she was sharing in a conspiracy. Her husband seemed unconscious of the plot. He was genuinely pleased to see his old patient once more, and as always was much interested in what the practical man of the large world had to say. His stern, bony face was serious, but mild.

"Well, I must be off!" Elport exclaimed at last.

When Helen urged him to stay and make them a visit, he shook his head.

"Another time. Now I am on an expedition — 'way up north — farther than you ever got. Why not come with me?" Then noticing the wife's look he added quickly, "Later, then — we'll go up into the real wilderness, eh?"

The doctor readily agreed.

"And now about my friend Eaton. The man seems a little touched in his mind. Poor old boy, he used to be a tremendous worker *la-bas* in our world! You'll go over with me now to see him?"

Dr. Percy smiled.

"Yes!"

So Helen watched the three men put off for the Settlement in the white launch, then slowly went up the steep cliff path to her home. A little smile played over her face, a smile of

content. The taming of the Wild One had begun, and it had all turned out differently from what might have been expected.

Elport had told her, also, an interesting bit of personal news. The Colonel would open the Eyrie for the season, and Mrs. Goodnow was to come there almost at once, and later, perhaps, Vera Councillor. It was exciting! She had to rest several times before she gained the top, and she realized that this steep path, a short cut from the Cove to her cabin, down which she had raced with her husband the summer before for their morning plunge in the Lake, was no longer possible for her. The little white launch was puffing fussily out past the headland into the Lake, the gasoline motor snapping like an angry dog. It was the first of its kind upon their quiet waters. Life was changing, she felt, and it held alluring promise. . . .

Her husband found her leaning over a dull fire in the great fireplace when he returned from the Settlement. At the first glance she could tell that his mood had already changed, as it so often did for no apparent reason. He was silent, pre-occupied with his own thoughts, did not caress her, scarcely noticed her presence. He was often taken with this black, dumb spirit when he had been to the Settlement. Nevertheless, she ventured to ask: —

“And how was the stranger?”

“He was there at the hotel, full of his troubles.”

“Very sick?”

“In mind.”

“Did you bring him back with you?”

“He’ll come to-morrow.”

“Where will you put him?”

“Anywhere — like the others.”

She smiled softly to herself. This Eaton, she knew, was a very rich man, accustomed only to the softer sides of a luxurious civilization. The thought of him ranged beside the “ragged regiment,” or lying on a cot in a windy tent, filled her with amusement.

“Eric,” she said after a pause, “did you know that the Eyrie was to be open this summer?”

He waited.

“My uncle, so Mr. Elport told me, is going to open it — and,” — she hesitated unconsciously, a little fearful of what her husband might think of her news, — “mother is to be with him !”

Her eyes fell away from his sharp glance. She could not confess that she had herself suggested this to her mother when she had written in response to that first letter.

“So they are closing in on us on all sides,” he observed.

“What do you mean?”

“First Elport comes, then his railroad and all the rubbish that brings, — among the rest this pot-bellied millionaire he’s left on my hands, — and now your mother tracks you into the wilderness !”

“It’s only natural,” she protested weakly. “Poor old mother !”

He looked at her darkly.

“She ventures back into the woods to capture you — and your child !”

“Oh, not that !”

She laughed at his exaggeration.

"Elport wants me to put up comfortable cottages — make a Hydropathic establishment out of the Healing Spring. Next he will run a launch in connection with his road, peddle the water at his lunch counters, advertise us in his folders. . . . They are closing in on us. Time to move on, woman!"

He put his hand on her neck in a rough caress. She looked up and smiled into his moody face, then with her small hands pulled his head to her bosom.

"I'm not ready yet for the trail, my Wild One!" she murmured caressingly.

"Yes, I forgot the child! When it comes, we'll wrap it in a blanket and tie it to your back papoose fashion, and move on!"

She did not argue the matter. What was the use of debate, her brown eyes seemed to say. Life arranged itself, was always working its own will, as at present, and this mother-to-be did not contemplate that it would demand of her a further move into the wilderness at the heels of her moody master.

"We won't let them catch us, anyhow," he muttered. And there for the present the matter ended, with the woman resting in the man's arms, her soft hand playing about his corded neck, — mystery in her brown eyes, vision in his!

As always and always from the beginning of time.

XII

It was her husband who first told her of her mother's arrival at the Eyrie.

"They came this morning, so Gray Jack said — ten trunks, three women, a Jap cook, and an Englishman."

"Fenton!" she exclaimed, ignoring the irony with which he enumerated Mrs. Goodnow's train.

"You will want to go over there to-day."

"Some time, of course," she replied, dissembling her eagerness.

"I will stay at the Spring with Percy for dinner," he announced curtly.

He had apparently thought out the situation, and while he made no objection to her resuming relations with her woman's world, she must not expect him to enter it.

He waited about the cabin while she got ready to go over to the Eyrie. They were both conscious of the same memory — that day fourteen months before when he had stalked into her little ordered world of Suburbia, and at a nod from him she had followed him out of her mother's home into the wilderness. To-day that seemed to her a greater event than it had then. Their love had been a peculiar relation — a defiance of the usual, the accepted. The very ceremony itself was evidence of revolt. And now she was guiltily aware

that in his eyes she was surrendering to the conventional, was hauling down her flag of defiance, so to speak, and she was secretly glad of the occasion. He said:—

“You seem to be in a hurry to get back there.”

She smiled faintly.

“Has it been so bad these months with me — so lonely?”

“Eric!” she protested.

“You seemed to be happy — for a time!”

“You know how happy we have been — we are!” she corrected, quickly.

“Yet you put on your coat and hat and run at the first chance,” he persisted in his mocking tone.

“You know I am content with you, always,” she protested. “It’s only natural,” — she hesitated and unconsciously her glance fell to her figure, which betrayed her condition.

“It’s only nature!” he repeated more gently.

After a silence, when she was ready to set out, she came to him and wreathed her arms about his neck.

“Wild One,” she whispered, “why can’t you act like — others!”

“Then I should have to *be* like them!”

“Well, why not — a little?” she flashed.

“Powerless and feeble — tied up — you would like that?” and he abruptly escaped from her embrace and went about his work.

She set out through the woods for the Eyrie, walking slowly, thinking that her husband should be there by her side, instead of working over his sick paupers at the Healing Spring. Then she meditated on the many events that had come into

her solitary life since she had parted from this mother. She was a little timid at the prospect of their first meeting, yet unexpectedly wistful for it, too.

Fenton, the smooth-faced, colorless Englishman was on the open veranda of the camp, directing the servants about the trunks. She was glad to see Fenton,—a well contrived automaton. He reminded her of order and Suburbia.

“Oh, Fenton !” she exclaimed, restraining her impulse to take him by the hand. “How are you ?”

“Very well, Miss Helen, and how are you ?” he asked in his correct servant’s voice. “Quite well — that’s good. You will find Mrs. Goodnow upstairs in her room, — yes, the same she had before, Miss. . . . Yes, we had a comfortable journey — the cars come through now — a great improvement, isn’t it ?”

As she went into the cottage, she thought that there was much good in the Fenton order of life, — so uniform and reliable !

“Mother !”

Mrs. Goodnow was saying to a maid in her rasping voice: —

“I don’t suppose you can get a clothes brush in this place. You shouldn’t have forgot to pack one — be careful of the lining, —” and turning to her daughter as the servant disappeared she continued in the same tone, — “Such worthless servants one has to put up with these days, and they demand such awful wages ! . . . Well, Nell, how are you ?”

In her glance was all the criticism she had been forced to restrain since her daughter’s flight from home.

“Very well, mother !”

Mother and daughter kissed and tacitly agreed to ignore

their difference. They dropped at once into family gossip, and an hour flew by. They "got on," as the saying is, more easily than either had expected, than they had, in fact, before the daughter's departure from home. Fenton served them a delightful luncheon on the veranda, and the little Jap's skilful rendering of the toothsome dishes of Suburbia pleased the young woman, as did the gossip about old acquaintance,—even her mother's familiar whine of disapprobation with life. After Fenton had left them, Mrs. Goodnow gave her daughter another, more searching examination, and then observed:—

"Well, where do you live, Nell?"

"Up the Lake half a mile, near the Spring."

"What does your husband do with himself? How does he support you?" the old lady bluntly questioned.

"Eric's been very busy this spring — there have been so many people sick in the camps."

"Practises medicine — here?"

"All about through the country — and he brings cases to the Spring. You must come over and see us, mother!"

Mrs. Goodnow grunted dubiously.

"Do they pay — these people he doctors?"

"Sometimes — when they can."

"Does that give you enough to live on?"

The daughter smiled at her mother's persistency.

"It doesn't cost much to live up here, as we live," she added, looking about the comfortable Eyrie, modestly called a "camp."

"Well," the old lady remarked after a time of reflection, "how could you have been such a fool, Nell?"

"But I don't think I was a fool!"

"You were — to throw away your chances like that! Why, you might have had almost any position."

"I didn't want 'em!"

"You were a fool," the older woman retorted positively. "I thought you would have found it out by this time."

"I never shall find it out!" she protested stoutly.

"Well, there's no help for that now. . . . Can't you make him do something else? The Colonel knows a railroad man — a Mr. Elport —"

"We know Mr. Elport very well," the daughter said quickly. "He stayed with us a long time last summer and fall."

"He said your husband had ability."

"Of course — he's a very remarkable man!"

"Then why can't he do something with his brains, — take you out of this lonely hole?"

"But, mother dear, he thinks he is doing something — here."

"Nonsense! Why don't he make money and let you live like other people?" . . .

And though the young wife tried to defend her husband and explain his purpose, she suddenly realized that it was with words not very dissimilar she had left him that morning.

Later in the afternoon Mrs. Goodnow accompanied her daughter home. The young wife was apprehensive of the coming meeting between the two old antagonists, and she stepped inside her door with trepidation. But the stone house was empty and the fire had gone out. A few dishes

from their hurried breakfast that morning were left upon the table. Mrs. Goodnow glanced about with keen eyes, and presently sniffed.

"Is this what you call your home? Poor Nell!"

In this exclamation — half wail — there was all the criticism of Suburbia upon the Primitive. The well-ordered large house, with its rugs done weekly by the vacuum process, its first and second parlor maid and chamber maid, its clutter of ugly and useless furniture, seemed to rear in its mistress's voice and throw contempt upon the crude simplicity of the little stone cabin.

"I'll make up the fire in a minute," Nell said hastily, anxious to defend her small nest from criticism. "It's really quite cozy here and comfortable enough."

While her daughter was busy with the fire and making tea, Mrs. Goodnow examined every corner of the tiny dwelling, from the bear skins on the floor to the hand-made bed with its fragrant mat of fresh balsam. Then she came back to the fireplace and seated herself gingerly on the broad settle. She took the tea from her daughter's hand, but set it down on the table untouched.

"It's simply ridiculous!" she began.

"What?"

"That you should be living like this — and doing your own work."

Her own mother had done all the work for a farmer's family of eight, including the hired man-servant, but that had long since been forgotten in the Goodnow family.

"But I like it — and it's good for me. See how well I am!"

"If he hasn't money enough to support you properly, why — I'll make you an allowance."

"Eric wouldn't take money from you, mother."

Mrs. Goodnow looked quite incredulous.

"He doesn't expect you to have a child *here*, does he?"

Mrs. Goodnow indicated the inner room with a disdainful wave of the hand.

"It's really comfortable enough."

"It's impossible!" the old lady pronounced with finality.

"I s'pose you have to bathe in the Lake?"

"Not in the winter!"

"Crazy — the whole thing. Just mad!"

She sipped her tea, then put it down again.

"When is the baby coming?"

This was the first direct reference she had made to the child, and the young mother reddened.

"The end of the month, I expect."

"You must come over to the Colonel's place as soon as we are settled."

"I don't think Eric would consent."

"He'll have to!"

The old lady pushed aside the tea and rose.

"You needn't come back with me — I can find my way."

I s'pose you'll have to get his supper!"

"There'll be plenty of time."

"To think of my daughter living so! It's like an emigrant!"

To the Puritan born, whose ancestors were all emigrants, there was nothing lower in the social lot. Her daughter laughed.

But as she reentered her home after accompanying her mother part of the way her face was grave. It occurred to her for the first time that the little stone cabin was not adapted to a family, — even a family of three. Her husband came in late, preoccupied. He seemed to have forgotten that she had seen her mother for the first time since their flight. He caressed her with the usual remark, "All well to-day?"

She did not venture then to raise the question that was agitating her mother, but some days later, after further urging from the old lady, she said: —

"Mother thinks I had better go to the Colonel's camp for my sickness."

"Why so?" he asked quickly. "Is she a good midwife?"

"It isn't — very roomy here — for sickness, you know."

"Oh, the cabin isn't large enough?"

"Not that — but —"

She did not like to remind her lover that she had been born to greater comfort than he gave her, and that while she was happy to play the savage in good health, she wished comforts for her illness.

"You want to go over there?" he asked quietly.

"I am alone here a good deal of the time, you know, Eric," she began indirectly.

"You want to go!" he interrupted with masculine directness. "Very well, then, you shall go!"

He rose and strode to his desk, where he busied himself for the evening without speaking. She had it on her lips to say, "But of course I won't leave if you feel like that." She did want to go to her mother's, however, — why not?

What more natural? She thought it was her husband's inexplicable moodiness, evidence of his oddity, — this dis-taste he manifested for every form of comfort — mere comfort. Not luxury, of course!

So the child was born in all the comfort of the Colonel's camp, in the same room where the mother had been sick before.

PART THREE

I

THE first time that Holden met Mrs. Goodnow was at his wife's bedside just before the birth of the child. The young wife's pains had come upon her unexpectedly shortly after her removal from the stone cabin, and her husband had been hastily summoned. Unfortunately he was absent — at the Settlement — and it was not until late that night, after his wife had been suffering many hours, that he reached the Eyrie.

“What is he thinking of,” Mrs. Goodnow fumed again and again, “to go off like that when you are sick !”

The wife between the paroxysms of her pain defended her husband, — “It's happened before we expected it.”

“It always does !”

“He has his work, — his patients.”

“His work !”

Mrs. Goodnow wanted to send for Dr. Percy, but Helen would not consent. “My husband will not fail me,” she said.

Even in her distress after so many hours of pain she was aware of the meeting between the two enemies, at her bedside, and conscious of the repetition of the scene that had been enacted there almost two years before.

Mrs. Goodnow had insisted on sending for old Scotch Nan, who had nursed all the Goodnow children through infancy,

and had also telegraphed for an obstetrical nurse from a city hospital, when she found that the doctor had no trained nurses at the Spring. With the same curt nod to the frowning lady that he had given her on that other occasion, and brushing aside the fussy old Scotchwoman, Holden bent over his wife and looked into her eyes without speaking. He laid his strong bony hand on her brow, and immediately she felt calmer, less afraid. His glance summoned the will in her to the fore, all the powers of her nature, as it had that other time when she was about to meet death.

“It will be all right, my Nell,” he said.

She tried to speak, to tell him things, — her regret that she had yielded to her mother’s suggestion and deserted their nest, the selfishness of her desire for little comforts and the attendance of servants. She whispered with effort. He seemed to understand and soothed her. He had forgiven her this temporary disloyalty to their love and their life. Under the influence of his touch, — his compelling strength and sure will, — she closed her eyes in content. With his arms about her she knew that she was secure, as she had been that other time when she was a girl.

“I will go back,” she murmured to herself, “with his child with me, — and he will forgive my weakness. And we shall never be apart again!” . . .

When she wakened from the sleep of exhaustion the next morning, and they had put her child into her arms, the old nurse said: —

“She’s a bonny little thing, Miss Helen!”

“She!” the mother cried.

“O’ course — it’s a fine girl baby.”

"Oh!" she gasped limply.

She could not understand how it had happened that *his* child was not a man child! Again, it seemed to her in her confused state of mind that she had somehow been false to her master in this one great service she had to render him. At last she summoned strength to ask:—

"The doctor?"

"He was wanted at the Spring. Another woman took with the pains — they came for him early this morning."

Another woman claimed him at this moment, which she felt with a touch of jealousy should have been all hers. She asked her mother, who came in at the moment:—

"Does Eric know it's a girl?"

"Of course he knows!"

When her husband entered the room later she could not tell from his face whether he were pleased or disappointed. He seemed more removed from her than the night before. Other cares had come between her great event and him. He was tender and playful, even gentle with Mrs. Goodnow, but he went away soon to let her rest.

She had made up her mind to go back to the stone cabin with her child almost at once, but everything opposed her intention. Mrs. Goodnow, who could now display her petty authority, would not hear of it. The child was too delicate and needed every possible care. There would be no room for the two nurses in the cabin, no comforts, not even a supply of hot water! So, for one reason or another, she stayed on at the Eyrie through the summer, seeing her husband daily, but never intimately nor for long periods. He was busier than ever, with new patients from the hotels at the Settlement.

Evidently the conspiracy was succeeding. The friend whom Elport had brought with him was almost well; it had been a curious and interesting case that demanded a special key, which after patient experimentation the doctor had found.

There was now a tent-camp under the trees about the Cove, which Holden described to her humorously,—“Chicken coops everywhere!” And he was experimenting with the new baths, which had been finished, seeking to discover the most effective methods of using them, and thus revive the healing properties of the old Spring. He was so busy, his mind so occupied, she felt with a pang, that he did not miss her greatly: certainly he did not urge her to return to their home.

One afternoon she thought to surprise her husband by walking over to the stone cabin and waiting for him there. She escaped her mother and the nurses, and set out by herself through the woods, her heart beating fast with excitement. She had a kind of homesickness for the Spring and the old simple life in her rocky nest upon the cliff, for her garden and the silent hours before the fire; but most of all for her husband, from whom she seemed more separated than the scant mile between the Spring and the Eyrie accounted for. As she neared the end of her path she noticed the familiar curl of blue smoke coming from the squat stone chimney, and a smile stole over her lips. Eric was at home already. They would have supper together: she might even spend the night in her little chamber above the Lake. The door was ajar; pushing it open softly she stepped within. As she paused just beyond the threshold, noting the old objects that seemed unfamiliar, she heard a cry. It was a feeble cry, an infant's

wail, and it came from the inner room. Often during the months of her pregnancy she had lain in that room and dreamed of the child's cry that was to sound therein some day! For the moment she felt giddy, unreal.

She collected herself and walked noiselessly to the door. A young woman was lying on the bough bed, trying to nurse a little baby. She seemed ill and worn, and the child was crying fretfully, as if dissatisfied with its mother. Helen turned and left the cabin, closing the door softly behind her. Below about the sandy beach there were white tents dotted under the green trees. A man and two women in the costume of nurses were passing back and forth on their duties. The quiet grove around the Healing Spring had been transformed since she had last looked upon it. . . . Hearing footsteps on the path behind her she turned to see her husband, who with head slightly bent in the familiar attitude of inner thought, was coming up the path toward the cabin. At sight of her he halted in surprise.

"Nell! You here!" he exclaimed. She perceived dissatisfaction in his voice and resented it. "Why did you come?" he demanded more sharply. "And no one with you?"

"I wanted to see my home," she answered with accusing eyes. "There's some one in there!"

"Yes," he replied quickly. "I put a woman in there. She was going to have a child — we could make her more comfortable up here by herself than in a tent."

"I see," she said dully. It seemed as if he wished to show her that when she had deserted the nest he had made for her, it could be used by any one who needed it. "When was it?"

"About six weeks ago — the day after your baby was born. . . . She was a waitress at the hotel. I sent Percy over to look after her when she was first taken sick. When the hotel people found that she was going to have a child, they threw her out of the hotel. So I had her brought over here — there was nothing else to do."

He explained the event as if he were unconscious of its importance. He had given her home, her room, her bed to a waitress at the hotel, with her child — probably illegitimate, and he thought nothing of it. Prejudices that she never suspected in herself rose in protest.

She turned into the path to the Eyrie without another word, thinking, "I shall never go back there again — never, never ! He did this to punish me !" But she knew that was not true.

Her husband walked by her side to the Eyrie, talking about the doings at the Spring, ignoring her trouble — if he perceived it. He spoke of the different new patients he was receiving — singular and difficult cases that challenged his mind and his will. For the time he seemed to have forgotten his dislike of strangers, innovation. The exercise of his gift, she could see, was absorbing him more and more, and he was apparently unaware of the change that was taking place in his attitude, in his environment.

She listened with latent hostility, but made no remark. She thought, "He is like other men — he falls into the trap set for him. We — Percy, Horace Elport, and I — set this trap for him, — baited it !" But she said nothing. And in spite of her hurt and angry mood she was really glad of the success he was having, of the promise of his work. At the

end of the path she bade him good-by hastily, without a kiss or a touch of the hand, and fled within to the child, — *her* child she felt now more than ever, — not his !

Late in August Mrs. Goodnow began to talk of her departure. Although the relations between her and her daughter never really surmounted the act of revolt that the latter had committed, the child made a strong bond between the two. The old lady spoke of taking the mother and the child back with her, “for a little visit, — why not ? ”

Helen wanted to go, but she had not the courage to propose the plan to her husband. It seemed on the surface a small matter. But she suspected that if she should leave now, in the present mood of division between herself and her husband, she might never have courage to return. And he would not come a second time to fetch her from her mother’s house ! She could not run that risk. For she loved her husband — her Wild One — and she would not let him slip from her hold in this weak fashion.

So she said finally to her mother: —

“I’ll not leave Eric now — perhaps later — when it comes right.”

“You don’t mean to live up here all your life, I hope,” Mrs. Goodnow remarked bluntly.

“Oh, I hope not — not always. . . . But of course as long as Eric thinks he must stay — ”

“Can’t he find something to do in a civilized place ? ” the old woman demanded. “It’s no life for a woman — you can’t bring children up here ! ”

And she continued with her usual complaint, — the deser-

tion of herself by her children in her old age. She urged Helen to use her influence with her husband to get him to the city, where he might be established in some nook of Suburbia and start a career of profitable fashionable practice, like other sensible men. That was a poor enough outlook for the daughter of her father, to be the wife of a fashionable doctor. But now that she had elected, committed her error, and seemed determined to stick by it, the best should be made of the situation. And the best was a safe and comfortable berth in Suburbia.

"Perhaps that will come some day," the wife replied.

But she was less assured than she had been of what she could do with her Wild One,—how much he would hearken to her desires. Moreover, thanks to Elport and Dr. Percy, there were the new developments at the Spring to be awaited.

"Well," Mrs. Goodnow grumbled, reluctantly yielding the point for the present, "at least you'll stay here in the Eyrie, where you can live comfortably and be decent, and not go back to that hut!"

To this the daughter agreed quite readily.

"You'll have to have hot water heat put in, and with some alterations this place could be made endurable for the winter."

So when her mother had begun her elaborate preparations for moving back to the city, packing her ten trunks and marshalling her corps of servants, Helen broached the subject of keeping the Eyrie and making it their home for the coming winter. Somewhat to her surprise her husband fell in with the plan readily.

"I suppose you would be better off here," he said.

"It is larger — more comfortable."

She did not mention the real reason that moved her, as she had refrained from alluding to the presence of that other woman in the stone house. Holden walked about her bedroom, where this talk took place, moodily examining the knick-knacks, the photographs, the lingerie, and toilet articles, with which her chamber had become cluttered in the familiar manner. He remarked casually: —

"Our old cabin will come in useful: we need some place away from the camp for the women!"

It was as if he had meant to stab her, — to plan thus quickly to turn their home, their first nest, with all its memories, into a hospital! How little sentiment he really had, after all the appearance of it he had shown, for their lovers' intimacy. Her lips tightened and she repeated to herself woman's old saying: "Men care nothing afterward. They merely cheat us with a show of feeling, at first." She watched the father playing with his baby, and wondered if he had any real feeling for his child. He had undressed the infant and was examining its little anatomy with the cool intelligence, the semi-ironical indifference of the scientist.

"Huh, young woman," he was saying, holding the staring baby on one knee, "your occiput is a little flat — we shall have to attend to that later. But on the whole a normal brain, and —"

"Give her to me!"

"What do you call her?" he asked, handing the little one over to the mother with a skilled but unaffectionate grasp.

"I do not *call* her!" she murmured indignantly.

"Well, about this place," he remarked, stretching himself lazily. "What does the Colonel want for it?"

"I don't know. Mother said he would be perfectly willing to have us occupy it for the winter."

"I don't do things that way," he answered with a scowl. "I'll buy it of him if he will sell it,—with all the land between here and the Spring."

"But —" It was on her lips to ask him how he could command such a sum of money as the Eyrie must cost. As she hesitated he looked at her with an unpleasant glint in his gray eyes.

"How do I happen to have the money? I've earned a lot of money this summer. And Eaton, that old man Elport brought up here, keeps shoving it at me—part of his mania, maybe—wants to get rid of it in big chunks. I suspect he robbed it in the first place, he leaks with it so. And the others would pay — there'll be no trouble about the money."

"I'm so glad!" she exclaimed, frankly showing her pleasure. It would gratify her pride to have her husband buy the property from her family.

Again that keen, hard glance made her uncomfortable.

"Glad to find your husband can make money like other men? It's not a hard trick to make money — if one wants to!"

She felt that he covered her people with his scorn, but she answered bravely: —

"I'm glad of course that we shan't have to take the house as a gift."

"That will never be necessary! I don't take gifts like

this—" He waved a disdainful hand. "I will ask Elport to speak to your uncle about it the next time he comes to the Lake."

Thus it was accomplished quite simply. The Colonel set a reasonable price upon his camp, which he was willing enough to sell with all its contents and the land as far as the Healing Spring.

"The place is yours," Holden announced to his wife when he came in the evening before Mrs. Goodnow departed. "The deed has been made out in your name."

Helen flushed with pleasure, and even her mother admitted grudgingly:—

"It's a pretty place, and healthy for summers. But I can't see what you do with yourselves winters."

"Live — just live !" the doctor replied laconically. "Did it ever occur to you, madam, that the less fuss you had about you the more you could live ?"

"I don't call it living !" the old woman retorted.

II

IMMEDIATELY after Mrs. Goodnow's departure workmen came to make the alterations at the Eyrie that mother and daughter had decided upon. Not only a system of heating was put in, but the kitchen quarters were made more commodious, upper floor part of the main building was finished and plastered, and part of the large veranda enclosed in glass. Helen found an unexpected delight in planning and supervising these improvements. Whether the new home was to be a temporary abode or not, it was her own, she felt, and she was ambitious to make it attractive according to her experience of what a comfortable and dignified home should be. The workmen stayed all that fall until after the snow had come, and when they left, the semi-rustic "camp" was hardly recognizable within. Mrs. Goodnow had sent up from the city cloth hangings for the walls, heavy rugs, lamps, and such articles of furniture as the two had decided upon. There was much correspondence between mother and daughter about these house matters and also about servants. Mrs. Goodnow had left three maids, but the cook had proved unsatisfactory, and the young wife, recognizing that a good cook would be the corner-stone of her establishment, had sent to the city for another.

For the most part her husband did not seem to notice what was going on in the Eyrie when he was at home, which

was not usually until after dark. Only when the change of cooks was in process he asked ironically if the services of four persons (including Scotch Nan) were necessary to look after the needs of two healthy grown people and a little baby. His wife smiled back at him convincingly, and he let her have her own way without further question in these domestic matters, as he had about the house — which she thought was quite as it should be. Nor was the money question ever raised between them. The bills for the work of alteration had not yet come in, and Helen was untroubled by consideration of expense. She felt that she was not extravagant by nature, and what she was doing with her new home was very simple indeed in comparison with what other people she knew did to make themselves comfortable. Behind it all she had her idea — a plan that she had persistently and quietly developed since she had taken the Eyrie. She meant to create a social atmosphere, here in the woods, or as she remarked once to her husband, "Live a little more like other people this year!"

For there were now in the neighborhood a few people who could appreciate an orderly and attractive home. The doctor frequently brought Dr. Percy from the Spring for dinner, and also Mr. Eaton, who was now quite himself, — a quiet, gentle, rather dull man of business. He lingered on at the Spring, timorous about himself and life in general. He was immensely grateful to the doctor, who had helped him regain control of his mind, and eager to show his devotion to the young wife. Then there was across the Lake a young engineer in charge of the railroad construction work, — a college man by the name of Langton, who got to the

Eyrie usually for Sundays. There came also, later in the winter, a mining man who had been brought down from the new camps ill with typhoid, and a melancholy young actor who had come into the woods for his vacation and had attached himself to the doctor. He was of a morbid and sentimental nature, and very confiding with women. Helen felt that she could do something for him.

These, whom the young wife had sifted from her husband's patients at the Spring as the men who could sit comfortably in a drawing-room and knew how to take a woman in to dinner, came more and more to the Eyrie. They would drop in for tea in the afternoon, stay on for the late dinner, and spend the evening about the fire, talking, playing games, reading. When the winter storms began to drift the snow high in the woods, the large living room of the Eyrie was a warm, comfortable, civilized haven in the wilderness, as the young wife meant it should be.

The lights of Blakely — as they now called the new town — twinkled nightly in friendly fashion across the narrow arm of the bay. Among them were a few large blue stars — the new electric arc lamps, — and these Helen liked to watch as they broke out across the dark water just at twilight. There seemed to her something warm and human in these beckoning lights from the little town, reminding her of the large world beyond the woods. After the guests had departed for the night she would stay for a little while on the veranda above the Lake, watching these earthly stars. Sometimes a train for the south would wind its fiery way about the further shore, whistling as it sped out of the little settlement and disappeared in the cut beyond. Often she

would waken in the dark nights and hear the throaty whistle of a locomotive across the Lake. In the frozen silence of the winter air it had a cheery, brave note, — a robust voice. The call from the steel throat of the locomotive spoke of the city, life, and the haunts of men, to which the engine with its burden of people was rushing. She would turn to look at the child, sleeping in its cot by her side, and with a smile of confidence in the future and all it held for them both, sink once more to sleep. She came to know these engine calls so that she could distinguish the individual voices. The loud, triumphant, hoarse voice was that of the northern express — "The North Star," as it was named in the poetry of the railroad folder — which passed through the Settlement in the early morning long before the gray dawn came over the frozen Lake. She listened with a peculiar interest to this herald of the great world beyond, calling to her as it sped past.

It was not often that the doctor's wife visited the Healing Spring, although the new path through the woods was short and kept well broken out by the men. She found much absorbing occupation in her new, more complicated household, in her child, and in her music, which now that she had a piano she had resumed. The men talked shop, as they called it, at dinner, and she listened, and felt that she knew all that was going on. But one day little Dr. Percy insisted on her seeing the new cabin he had built for himself on the ledge above the Spring, and afterwards they went down to the hospital to see the new mess room, — a long low stone building with a thatched roof where the nurses were to live.

There was also a new cabin, — a pretty little Swiss affair with broad dark eaves, on which the sentimental actor was working. These new buildings, and the bath-house, gave an air of permanent habitation to the grove. And the place had always the busy aspect of people coming and going, of work pushing forward, altogether unlike the snowy quiet of the previous winter.

Some of the summer patients had stayed on and new ones had come. A forlorn woman — a school teacher — was occupying the little stone cabin on the cliff. These days Helen never went that way.

“The place has changed a lot, hasn’t it?” Dr. Percy observed.

“Oh, yes, it has changed!”

She thought of the day when the fever patient had stumbled into the camp, and she had helped her husband get him to bed.

“What did I tell you? . . . We might easily have more patients than we could handle, but the doctor won’t take ‘em. He turned away a woman that came all the way from New York last week — said she wanted too much attention! And then he lets that school teacher stay, — has had her here for five months. . . . But if he is going to keep on building like this, he will have to make the patients pay more, at least some of them!”

“Of course,” she agreed, and added after reflection, “It’s only right they should. There are hospitals and places for those who can’t.”

“And it makes ‘em think more of what you do for them if they have to pay a good price for it!”

Helen laughed at the observation, which seemed to her nothing more than good human sense. The next time that she and her husband were alone together she asked him why he had refused to accept the New York lady as a patient.

"You mean that Mrs. Lord? . . . She was an idle, foolish woman, who brought her troubles on herself —"

"I have heard you say most sick people do!"

"She was the kind who did not want really to face them — there's no cure for that sort. I can't waste my time over them. Let her go to a sanitarium and be nursed."

"But all fashionable women are not worthless," she protested. "And if you refuse rich and fashionable women, how can you make money?"

It was a pertinent question, for the house expenses in the Eyrie were necessarily large and the bills for the alteration had come in — a few hundred dollars, not at all excessive, the young wife felt, but they must be paid. She had an interest in her father's fortune which would come to her after her mother's death, and she saw no reason why she should not take the money that Mrs. Goodnow offered her now. But her husband would not hear of it.

If, then, because of pride or any theory about money and living, he refused to let her enjoy her own money, he must of course provide what was necessary himself. There was an inescapable logic to this, she felt, and she waited placidly for the solution he would find for the universal problem. She had already ordered some dresses and personal articles through her mother, who had paid for them. She did not tell her husband of these expenses.

The bills remained upon the doctor's private desk for some

weeks. She knew that they weighed upon his mind, although he never mentioned them. At last they disappeared, were paid, she presumed, as bills must be paid in the end. Some new patients came to the Spring, of the sort who could amply pay for their entertainment, and this time they were not refused. At first she felt a little guilty: she had in a sense forced her husband to do something against his principles. But when she considered the matter more fully, she was sure that the result was inevitable — and quite clear and right. Even here on the edge of the wilderness economic laws might not be evaded. The bargain and sale method of conducting human relations had been too long established in the world not to be sound fundamentally.

She was proud that her husband could already attract people from a distance who were willing to pay considerable fees for his services. Unconsciously he was growing more important in her eyes, as he undoubtedly had become to Dr. Percy, Mr. Eaton, and the other members of their little group since he had developed a capacity for earning money. . . .

Thus the bills were paid, and money was forthcoming in plenty for the needs of the comfortable establishment the young wife had created at the Eyrie. And the Wild One was becoming properly tamed, as it is necessary with Wild Ones, through marriage. The gift of the Healer was being appraised in the markets of the world, and it promised to bring a good price to its possessor and those bound to him.

III

THAT their life had greatly changed the doctor's wife might easily perceive on her infrequent visits to the Healing Spring, — a transformation within one short year. There were the new buildings, the presence of strange faces, — sophisticated city patients, nurses, and attendants. There was more than this of change, — more than she was aware of, — more than the change of homes from the stone cabin upon the lonely cliff to the comfortable Eyrie, more than the subtle change from being the worshiped mistress of her wild lover to becoming the mother of his child. More than in the bustle of the hospital camp, the bustle of the Settlement and the Lake. There was change in her, in him, merely reflected in the face of their changed environment.

Change, always change in the restless dance of will and desire, — it is the abiding condition of being. Change, endless, eternal, superficial, yet cataclysmically rending of souls ! Change from the budding tree to the fading leaf, from the freezing water to the rotting ice, from the fluid charm of youth with its dream to the fixed habit of maturity with its reality, — life itself is but the flux of change. . . .

The young wife and mother, even in her growing pre-occupations with household and child, realized acutely at times the change that had come over her. She regretted those moments that had somehow slipped by her into oblivion,

and could never be reborn. She remembered that intimate solitude in which she had lived with her husband the winter before in their little stone cabin,— the long evenings of talk and silent musing before the fire, the long nights of love and worship, the long days in the radiance of the snowy wilderness, the expeditions she had made with her man shoulder to shoulder over the frozen white floor of the Lake up into the distant recesses of the wilderness. And these, she felt, were but the outer facts: the inner truth was so much deeper, as the change of the spirit within her was so much more poignant, than the change of her environment, though inexpressible in words. Never, it seemed to her, had man and woman been as close as they had been. They had breathed and thought and acted as one! That was the romance she had dreamed in her girl's heart,— the promise which he had fulfilled for her,— that each for each should be all in all,— two yet always one. Thus it had been for those few precious months, until —

Ah! she sighed. It was the penalty of life: the dream could never endure. It must always realize itself in the prosaic, as at present. The lover must become plain husband; the God, mere man. That was the universal experience according to the testimony of all good women. Love of the sort they two had known might not last any more than the heavenly radiance of gold and rose and purple upon the peak of Macatawa at dawn could last throughout the day when the sun shone at a different angle. It was given to the human heart — the woman's heart — to desire and experience, and then to sigh for what had been. . . . At least, she comforted herself, the life they now led was "more

normal." Strange paradox of the woman nature — to seek the normal and sigh for the supernal, to lap herself in comfort and dream of the stars !

Her husband rose before it was really light, as he always had done, and left her dozing in her big soft bed, while he got his simple breakfast by himself. He would not have the servants roused, for he disliked all personal service, and years of living alone had made these tasks seem light to him. Then he went for the day to the Spring. Sometimes the wife wondered about him after he had left her side — pondered the change in him. Surely he was more "like other people" nowadays, as she had often wished he might be. He was the busy doctor, preoccupied with his duties, thinking of his patients, — their needs and troubles, — planning improvements at the hospital camp he was fast building up. So far he did not differ much from the ordinary professional or business man she had known in the city : he worked hard and returned to his home at night, weary and silent. But it was not the change in the routine of the day that she thought of : it was the change in the man, — especially towards herself. The change in her lover.

Gradually the doctor was called less and less to the distant camps. The railroad had brought other doctors and conveniences of civilization into the woods, so that his services were not imperative, and he preferred now to have the sick come to him at the Spring. Occasionally in answer to some special call of need — or to satisfy his own restless instinct for the wilds — he would bind on his long shoes, strap his medical pack on his back, and gun in hand start forth over the white Lake for the snowy hills — alone. He never asked

her to go with him, never suggested making one of their old expeditions together. He would merely send word from the Spring by Gray Jack or Dr. Percy not to expect him that day. Then she would see him plodding steadily through the snow, slightly bent forward against the wind, the stern, immobile face with the long locks frozen about the brow — alone !

A day, sometimes two or even three, would pass before his return. The wife felt that these absences were times of reversion to the old wild mood of revolt, — revolt now against her and all that had come over his life and his home and his Healing Spring. He never spoke to her in these moods, — never complained nor criticised her — merely disappeared, to be with himself, — as if he felt the need of regaining in the snowy solitude of the wilderness the sight of some ideal that was becoming obscured in him, was fading from his daily horizon. . . . So she saw him set forth with a sense of jealousy and fear and was anxious while he was away — she even asked herself if he would come back ! Some day, she feared, the call of his own moody spirit would be too strong, would make him abandon altogether the life he was now living, leave her and their child, his sick and his Spring, and strike out again for a new world. And then she would regret her part in weaving the silken cords that bound her Wild One to her and life as it is !

But he came back.

What did the man think by himself ? Was he aware of the change, the drift of the current in which he was caught ? He who was so firm of will, so convinced of his personal force ! For change was snaring him, turning his purposes slyly to something other than he had willed. He was becom-

ing more and more the modern man of medicine,—the successful practising physician, half trickster, half healer,—running an hotel for the rich sick, selling his gift for the thirty pieces of silver, bit by bit. Not all of that yet ! But the current was drifting him fast into the inevitable. Already he took “paying patients,” not merely as a grudging concession to their special needs, but because he must, because he had need of their money to meet his expenses, and need of the fame they might spread of him in order to lure others of their kind to his Healing Spring. No longer did he work for pure joy in his gift, with the interest of science and love and pride. He strove to give good measure for the pay he took — the tradesman’s honor. Cheap bargain with the soul. . . .

There were still in his simpler cabins the poorer patients, the derelicts of the wilderness ; but it would not be long before these must disappear. For rich and poor will not mingle even in sickness and death. The Healing Spring might yield its secret once more, but it would yield it for those who had money in their purse to pay.

What then of that lofty Ideal — that ardent desire to pour out the healing water for all in need ? What of all Ideals ? Pure visions of another world, illusions in this one. Born in the heart of youth, they burn feverishly, urging youth towards distant goals ; but in manhood they are found buried beneath the dust of conformity and compromise. For this Healer the dust was already gathering on his horizon, and he was uneasily aware of it. In his lonely vigils in the frozen forest was he debating with himself the reasonableness of compromise, or darkly thinking of breaking the silken cords about his feet and girding himself once

more for flight into the utter solitude of wilderness or city, there to be at peace and work his will?

A man's will must prevail, — that he had told his wife was the secret of the gift — pure will! He poured a stronger will into the weakened bodies of his sick to support their enfeebled wills. And now was circumstance bending this strong, free will? Was change sapping it? Change leads ever to more change in the endless mood of time, — change of act to change of circumstance and change of self. So the moment comes when the initiative of man ceases to be. He loses the power to act surely, to grasp his Ideal, to make something of it endure through him. . . . When is a man free? When has his will bent already to circumstance? The passing of money between men, immemorial bargain of power, is a slight thing; the change from shelter to shelter is a slight thing; but the current of change runs, and with a volume finally unopposable by mortal man. At all moments until the last he is conscious of his divine power of will, — the freedom to create. And then the power has gone! Change has fixed him fast in fate. . . . Meanwhile, as they said of the doctor, — those who watched the young healer with the marvellous gift, — "He is doing a great work and he will surely do a greater before he dies: he will become celebrated, famous for his cures, for his contributions to the art of healing."

At any rate he came back to his work, to his wife and child. And the waiting woman, relieved in her heart by his appearance, found him gentler, softer, — more easily "tamed" after these solitary wanderings. . . .

"Where have you been?" she demanded on one occasion when he appeared about twilight after a two days' absence.

"Up in the woods," he replied vaguely.

He flung himself down dumbly before the blazing fire and lay there with closed eyes, weary and stiff. She made coffee for him over the fire as she used to the winter before when they returned from their long expeditions together, and then while he dozed in the heat she played to him softly passages from operas that she had heard in her other life and loved. Their flaming notes brought back scenes of that past, desires, and made her restless, until she broke off with a harsh chord, went back to the fire, and knelt there beside her husband.

"Why do you always leave me behind, Eric?"

He opened his eyes and looked at her steadily for several moments without reply. There was something in those still, piercing eyes that made her shrink, and yet she persisted.

"Why don't you take me with you, Eric? I'm strong and well now — stronger than I have ever been!"

"I did not think that you cared to go this winter," he said slowly.

"Of course I care — I want to be with you more!"

"We are together."

"But not as we used to be — I want to be with you as we used to be, just we two!"

"You seemed to find that too lonely."

She knew that he was thinking of how she had left their nest when the child came, and it seemed to her unjust. She was silent, and then with an irresistible impulse there burst from her the desire that she had been secretly nursing.

"If you would only take me away somewhere — abroad!"

"Abroad?"

"Just for a little while, — to London and Paris and Rome and Vienna." She spoke the names slowly, with the savor of romantic pleasure.

"Why?" he demanded with smiling lips.

"To see something! . . . To live — where there is music — to *live*," she murmured.

He said nothing, but he still smiled. She bent closer to him, coaxingly.

"Why not, Eric? . . . For a little while — a few months?"

"You are very beautiful," he replied irrelevantly. Then he drew her towards him, to the floor by his side, and kissed her. Still smiling, he said, "So you want a little taste of the world, — want to go back where there is music, life, people!"

"Yes!" she exclaimed, yielding to his caress, her lips meeting his, but her mind still aglow with her own desire. "And you will take me — just for a little while?"

She smoothed his hair with her hand and her lips formed in a cajoling smile. She was soft and yielding in his arms, — a little, light, delicate creature, in shimmering silk and soft lace. He held her pretty head away from his face and studied its eager expression.

"How about my work — the patients?" he asked.

"Dr. Percy could look after them for a little while."

She did not then utter the thought that was also in her mind, — the half-formed intention not to let him come back again into the empty wilderness. Much might happen

for them, once they were out in the large world. She merely added, coaxingly, "You could manage that!"

"And the baby?"

"Oh, we'll take her — or leave her with mother."

He laughed loudly, half raising himself and supporting his weight on his elbow.

"You've thought it all out!"

"Of course — I've been planning it for some time," she said daringly. "I'm so lonely — have so much time to think."

"Lonely!"

Her hair fell over his arm in a wave, — a golden ripple of fine silk. The loose gown she wore parted at the neck, revealing her pretty shoulders and her rounded breasts, — the formed woman within its silky folds.

"God!" he exclaimed. "You are so sweet!"

He held her away from him, his glittering eyes devouring her fresh young loveliness as if he would not miss one item of the feast.

"Am I? . . . Do you love me — still?" she murmured.

There was something in her husband's attitude, in the expression of his hungry eyes, that she had never before been conscious of. It was an intense appetite of the eyes, troubling, disturbing, and yet intoxicating to her. He seemed to uncover her beauty — see not her, but merely the woman in her — the creature of flesh and color and form.

But he loved her still, — desired her — her heart sang triumphantly. She could still make him do what she wished. Her woman's control of her Wild One — her former master — was complete.

"We shall be very happy over there by ourselves," she mused. "It will be as it was before — as it was at first, when we are always together again. I'll show you all the places and things I've seen!"

His face came nearer to hers. It was illuminated by the ruddy light of the fire. It was no longer weary and worn, with lines, but full of life and warmth, of passion. Yet he answered her with that same cold voice.

"So you'll show me things — all you have seen? . . . We must go! We must get you music and life — what you want. . . . Come!"

His lips were upon hers. He was crushing her sweet body to him. And even in the intoxication of this passionate moment, while she joyously yielded to him, she felt that subtle sense of power, chiming triumphantly in her little brain, elating her. Her heart sang the refrain:—

"He is mine! He is mine! He is mine!"

Waking that night in her warm bed she heard the throaty whistle of the North Star Express, calling across the Lake to her, "Come with me!" and she answered it with a contented smile, "I am coming — soon!"

Afterwards she lay snuggled in her pillows, unable to sleep, thinking of those passionate moments in the twilight, thinking of this other man who had then been revealed in her Wild One. A man more like ordinary men as she supposed them to be — not the lover and the poet. She missed the lover and the poet, however, with whom she had tramped the wilderness shoulder to shoulder, — comrades. That love she had tasted at first, — tender, adoring, controlled, —

that, too, had been wonderful. She remembered the night her husband had spent guarding her, keeping the fire alight to warm her while she slept under the fir tree in her snow bed. Then he was all reverence for the tender woman, who had deigned to come to him from afar. Were they never to know such moments again? . . . Now he was man, strong and sensual, like other men. . . . Life went on in change, and the rare beauty that was possible to it somehow faded inevitably along the way. The woman sighed.

So it seemed that if their first child had been gotten of the spirit, in a cloudland of worship with reverence, this second one would be gotten of the body in a moment of passion, when there was no union of man and woman in spirit. Nevertheless, with a smile on her sweet young lips the wife slept at last, content with what she had.

IV

THAT spring they went to the city.

There were, of course, many compelling reasons why they should go, as the young wife easily proved to her husband in his more yielding moods. Mrs. Goodnow, who had been ailing all the winter, naturally wished to see her daughter and her grandchild. The sister was to be married. There were clothes to be got for herself and the child. Besides, she said boldly, she needed the change: they both needed it. And now that there was prospect of her having another child this was the time to leave, if ever.

Nevertheless, the doctor put off the journey from time to time with one excuse or another. Dr. Percy must have his vacation. When he returned, he brought with him several troublesome patients, who must be watched carefully and started right or sent off.

The little doctor told Helen that it was important for Holden "to run down to the city for a few weeks and see people,—get to know some of the doctors, who might send him good cases. They are talking at the medical school about our work. I told everybody that the doctor would come in to see them one of these days!" When Helen repeated this to her husband, he merely laughed.

Their departure was decided for them at last and was hurried. One day Holden received a telegram from Horace

Elport asking him to come at once to the city to see him. And what the doctor had not yielded for all his wife's coaxing, he decided upon immediately at the demand of friendship. "Elport needs me," he explained to her. "We will start to-night."

It gave her some chagrin to realize that it was loyalty to a friend rather than the wish to please her that had finally moved her husband, but she accepted the kindly intervention of fate and cheerfully made her hurried preparations. They set forth for the Settlement at dusk of a raw windy day at the end of March. The ice still covered the Lake, though the steel runners of the cutter sank into its soft surface and the horse splashed through pools of water. A sullen cloud hung damply over the west, threatening to break into storm.

"A good time to be leaving!" Helen observed gayly.

"For you any time would be good for leaving."

"Don't say that!" she protested. "I love the Lake, too — but less of course these dead weeks of the year."

"It is never dead to me," he said.

The excitement of her mood grew throughout the long journey southwards. Two years before when she had fled from the city into the wilderness with her lover, she thought that her old life had stopped. A woman's life, it had seemed to her then, must be merged into her man's life and find its peace and happiness in him and his activities. But she was beginning to perceive that this was a childish view of marriage. Ever since the germ of another life had first begun in her, her old self as an independent being had gradually awakened, and now was persistently urging its own rights to happiness.

While she played with her baby and watched the winterish landscape slide past the car window, her husband napped in his seat or stared dumbly at the drab fields. His clothes already seemed quite impossible in the plush magnificence of the Pullman car. The wife determined to put him at once into the hands of a good tailor — the Colonel would be able to recommend one. Except for the matter of clothes her man satisfied her woman's pride: he was strong and powerful, — lean, sinewy, with a singular face, large and brooding. He was a distinguished man in appearance, she was proud to feel. And she began once more the endless weaving of her little dreams. Perhaps they were making this journey for the last time — who could say? Much might happen in the great city.

The day they arrived the air was soft and warm. Jonquils and hyacinths were for sale on the streets. Instead of shaggy furs and thick wool, the people wore light clothes of striking and varied color. The child of Suburbia enjoyed the city crowds, the sharp calls, the rumble and the roar of the thronged streets. This was life, once more! She forgot the two years' silence in which she had existed. . . .

The doctor, suffering from the woodsman's smothered sensation within four tight walls, threw open the windows of their hotel room, and standing side by side they looked down the cliff wall to the ribbon-like street ten stories below, with its jostling mass of human atoms.

“Isn’t it great!” she cried, in response to the mighty voice of the city. “People, people everywhere! So many people! Don’t you feel it — life, life!” she chanted with quick abandon, as if intoxicated by the mere presence of human

beings. Her husband was gazing into the noisy gulf of the street, an ironic smile on his expressive lips. He, also, seemed affected by the first booming onslaught of the human organism, but he made no remark.

"Don't you feel it?" she repeated, dancing on tiptoes, to look farther up the street.

"I hear it," he murmured.

But she had turned already from the window in her excitement, too restless to hold her mind on anything. She wandered aimlessly through the rooms of the little apartment, noting the gleaming nickel and tile of the bath-room, the heavy ornate furniture, — all the dear details of her former existence. Perceiving the telephone instrument on the table, — that symbol of a chattering world, — she ran to it and began turning over the innumerable leaves of the ponderous directory.

"I'll call up Vera! She's living in the city this winter," she said to her husband, who was watching her curiously. Her fingers ran swiftly down the crowded columns of names, so many, many thousands of lives with which the little instrument could put her into immediate communication! She felt their exciting presence all around her. "And there's Mollie — she's married — what is her name?" She buried her face in the big book. Out of the cloudland of dream she had come back to the earth, — *her* earth.

"And we must see the new plays, the ones Percy told us about. . . . We will go to the theatre every night, won't we? And the opera — and the pictures, — oh, there is so much; it will take us months to catch up with life!"

While she was listening for the voice of her old friend out of

the confusing city rumble, her husband disappeared, and she scarcely saw him for the next few days. She did not miss him. Caught up at once in an exciting whirl of little doings she had no time for reflection. The parlor of their suite was quickly transformed with flowers, packages, notes. Once her touch upon civilization was established through the telephone, old friends and acquaintances sprang up like magic on all sides, and expressed their friendly good-will in the pleasant, conventional manner.

Thus Vera Travers, coming in early the next morning, found her friend in the midst of confusion. It was like the home-coming of a petted school girl, whose relations delight to indulge with all the sweets so long denied, and the maturer woman, possibly thinking of the last time she had seen her friend, smiled indulgently. She herself had grown larger, more commanding, and in her highly decorative gown,—full fashion of the day,—with her jewelled hands and tinkling ornaments, was the complete figure of a developed city woman. Helen looked at her with growing admiration.

“How handsome you are, Vera! And — and —”

“Healthy?”

She supplied the word with a gurgling laugh of complacent well being.

“Yes — but I was going to say — competent!” Helen gasped with a little sigh, as if she divined already what success the other had had in marriage and life.

“And you?” Vera Travers put her two broad hands around the other’s face and examined her shrewdly for betrayals. “How has it been with my little Rebel?”

“Right, of course!”

"You still like it — your Wild One and his wilderness, love in a stone cot?"

"Why — yes."

"Oh!" Vera laughed slyly. "Love and Freedom and all that — they are still sufficient?"

"You must make us a visit this summer and see for yourself."

"My dear, Gerald in a camp! You don't know Gerald yet. He can't dress without his man, and what he would do with himself in the woods I haven't the least idea. . . . But I want to see your Wild One — where is he?"

"He's gone somewhere to find Mr. Elport."

"However did you manage to get him to the city? You must have cut his claws — a bit?"

"Only one little visit in two years — that isn't much!"

"Is it only two years since you ran away?"

"A lot can happen to a woman in two years," the young wife observed sagely.

"Yes, indeed! One lives in two years," the older woman admitted.

In that time she had accepted marriage with her young diplomat, who was no longer serving his country in foreign capitals, but doing something of an elegant nature in banking. Thanks to the wife's generous fortune, they were living very pleasantly in a large house in the proper quarter of the great city. And in return for what Vera had given, she had a child and an increasingly busy social life, besides a handsome husband to look after, — all in two short years. It had not been altogether the life she had planned for herself, but whose life ever turned out as it had been planned? At least if it

had not had much romance in it — like Helen's — it was prosperous and socially successful. Vera Travers at thirty was wholly practical: she neither dreamed nor regretted — she lived.

So she quickly shook herself out of her reverie and came to the positive present.

“How long are you to be here, Nell?”

“Oh, I hope a long time — I can't tell.”

“What can I do for you, Nellie?” she began methodically. “I don't mean shopping and all that — but with people. . . . I'll bring Gerald in this afternoon, and you must have your husband here. Then you will come to us for dinner early next week, Monday — no, we are engaged that evening. Wednesday? It will have to be Friday, after all! . . . And whom do you want to meet?”

“Oh, anybody!”

“Horace Elport, of course.”

“He's so dear —”

“He knows everybody — a very useful friend,” Vera amended. “And the Jenkses — she's a bore, but your husband should see him. He's very important at the medical school. And there's that delightful Dr. Farrington! He married Nina Peters, you remember, and is becoming very well known. You must meet him!”

Helen had not heard of Dr. Farrington.

“Your husband will know all about him. He came from the south and everybody is quite crazy over him — so distinguished, such delightful manners, my dear, and so good looking!”

As Vera Travers continued to name a tentative list of

her party, Helen realized that dinner was not a mere meeting of friendly souls, but a diplomatic gathering, at which much or little might be accomplished according to the hostess's skill and tact in making her combinations.

"They are all people you ought to know. They might be useful to you sometime," she concluded.

"How many people you know!" the younger woman remarked, half enviously.

"One can't help it," Vera replied easily. "But most of them aren't interesting. Gerald doesn't like peculiar people, thinks they are bad form,—just clever people, you know!"

She laughed pleasantly, as if Gerald's opinions were unique, but not to be considered seriously.

"Perhaps 'Gerald' won't like us!"

"Of course he will, little one — I'll tell him to!" And Helen understood that this husband did as he was told to do by his competent wife.

Then they went to see the child and dallied for some time longer, talking babies and husbands and the gossip of Suburbia. The younger woman's admiration for her able friend found expression in a final burst: —

"You have made so much of your life, Vera!"

"I have made the best of it," the other remarked with significant emphasis. "And that's about all we married women can do."

"I wish I knew how to do that!"

"Why, what's lacking, little one?" the other inquired with a fine smile. "Yours is all to be made yet."

"But we live so far from everything!" she cried inarticulately.

“You want to come back to the city?”

Helen nodded her head quickly.

“Ah!” Vera Travers’s smile deepened, as if she were thinking again of that morning when she had watched the two lovers disappear into the stream of the city street.

“It’s so lonely up there, and no place to bring up children in!”

“But would the doctor be content to change—what does he think of it?”

“Oh, after he got used to it — he’s very clever, you know.”

“Of course. Mr. Elport told me he was the ablest doctor he had ever met, and Dr. Jenks said he was the wonder of the school when he was there — but —”

“All he needs is to get started,” the young wife said with assurance.

“But I thought he had started something up in the woods?”

“Oh, that, — the camp!” the wife exclaimed with dissatisfaction.

“Well, we’ll think it over,” Vera said slowly in meditation. “Don’t forget my dinner — Friday! . . . Good-by, dear!”

The two women embraced and parted. Nothing of deep importance had been said between them, and yet the young wife had learned much and clarified her own ideas. For in this wise the real education of women is accomplished.

V

WHILE the two young wives were examining each other after the momentous experience of marriage, Holden was renewing his acquaintance with city ways and sophisticated ideals. He had spent some hours with Horace Elport at one of his clubs, learning the urgent cause of that telegram which had called him to the city in haste.

Elport had a son, — a boy at college in one of the large universities. Somehow the lad "had got mixed up with a woman" outside his caste, possibly had married her, the father feared.

"It will ruin his life, if I can't get him away and straighten matters out!" Elport exclaimed, leaning back in his padded chair wearily. "You see how it is, Doctor?"

Holden nodded, thrust his long hands into his pockets, and stared, unresponsive, before him into the luxurious club-room, which was cosily arranged with little groups of tables and chairs where men might relax and take their ease in privacy. On the walls were many mediocre oil paintings, and on the floors heavy, costly rugs. The doctor examined it all as if it were part of the case presented to him for judgment.

"It's an old story, I'm afraid," the father said with a sigh. It *was* an old story that he had been telling, not so much in

word as in inference, — the story of his own ambitious marriage, his successful efforts to “make good,” an easy, complex establishment wherein the child went his way as the parents went theirs, — the “best” schools, the “best” of everything for everybody! When the mother died, the boy had been sent to a large boarding school, then to college. The father hardly knew him, and then one day this unexpected blow had fallen.

“Well, what do you want of me?” Holden demanded bluntly.

“I want you to save the boy for me!” he cried.

He had developed a plan of escape. If he could induce the young doctor and his wife “to take the boy abroad somewhere for a few months,” he would with his lawyer’s aid “fix up” the rest — in other words buy the woman, buy a divorce, if necessary, — anything.

“And the boy?” Holden asked.

“Oh, you can manage him, I’m sure, once he’s out of this creature’s reach!” Elport replied eagerly. “Your wife will be a splendid influence for him. You can go wherever you like, do what you want. . . . You’re the one man, Holden — and you’ll do it for me?”

In his experienced eyes the young doctor had an interesting and powerful personality, which he wished to buy, as he bought other rare and precious things that he needed for one purpose or another. Like many men of his order he thought most highly of “personality,” and talked much about it. When misfortune overtook him, he at once considered what “personality” would help him best to extricate himself.

He dangled skilfully before Holden’s eyes the bribes that

he could offer for this great service, suggested enticing possibilities that might result, and when Holden asked, "How about my work at my camp?" proposed that he abandon the Spring altogether.

"You can do better than that in this city, Holden!" he said.

He spoke of a lucrative position in a life insurance company where he had influence, and of obtaining an appointment on the medical staff of a great hospital.

"The right thing will turn up — you needn't fear!" he said confidently.

The rich man wanted to buy a special dispensation, a miracle for himself, and he was willing to pay any price. The doctor listened silently to the various suggestions, — the bribes, — until at last he shook his head impatiently: —

"We'll talk about that later. . . . Why don't you do this thing for the boy yourself? It doesn't seem to be exactly a medical case."

"Oh, I can't get away, — all tied up. . . . If I should drop things now, it might be very serious."

Holden smiled coldly.

"And I don't believe I could do much for Harry. You know how it is with parents. . . . I'm sure you are the right man to get hold of him — that is the great thing, of course! . . . He's at a hotel near here — will you let me take you over there now?"

"Give me the address," Holden replied. "I will see him — and see the woman, too, — that creature," he said meaningly. "And if I can help you, I'll let you know afterwards."

"Good!" the father exclaimed, much relieved. "We must

act quickly, you know, before the scrape gets out and there's a newspaper scandal and all that!" . . .

Holden watched the gray-haired man step into his great car and sink heavily into a padded corner, his brow already furrowed with a fresh care as he directed the driver to another address. Then the young doctor dropped the card Elport had given him into his pocket and turned into the avenue, walking slowly up the city in the direction of the medical school.

An unknown young doctor from the backwoods might well have been elated at the opportunity offered him to render such a service to a man like Horace Elport. It might easily mean a stepping-stone of huge proportions in a professional career. It was almost as promising as to be called unexpectedly to attend some public personage in a severe illness and sign newspaper bulletins. But Holden, as he proceeded up the crowded avenue at a leisurely, observing pace, was not thinking of the bribe. He had never before experienced Elport's worldly side as he had this afternoon, and it gave him much to meditate upon. "He must do it himself," he muttered, "if it is to be done!"

After a time he turned down a quiet side street and stopped before an ugly brick building, — one of a small group of dingy, barrack-like affairs. Within the walls of these buildings he had spent the most eager years of his young manhood, and as he looked at them again, a wave of old associations flooded his mind, — hopes, ambitions, desires, defeats. The peculiar smell of drugs in the corridors stimulated his visions of the past. He pushed open the door of an upper room where a slight, bald man was bending over a laboratory

bench with a collection of small glass dishes spread before him.

"Where the devil did you come from?" the man at the table exclaimed, taking the green shade from his eyes.

"From the woods, Graham," Holden replied. "Have you found that bug yet?"

"Not yet!" the young scientist said placidly with the confident air of a thorough worker. "But I am very near it!" And he plunged at once into a description of his experiments and line of investigation. From the next room came a curious noise, like a miniature barnyard, in which were mingled the little squeaks of guinea-pigs with the subdued cackle of hens.

"Your patients?" Holden inquired.

"Yes, I'm using roosters for the test chiefly," and the scientist continued his explanation.

For more than five years, as Holden knew, — ever since he had graduated from the medical school, — this quiet little man had been absorbed in one pursuit, — the discovery of an anti-toxin for pneumonia. All these years he had worked here in the strong-smelling upper room of the laboratory, undisturbed by the clamor of the great city, the flutter of professional ambitions. It was the cleanest passion of idealism known to our day that animated him, — devotion of the medical scientist in pursuit of diseases and their antidotes.

Holden listened to his eager discussion of the subject. The familiar apparatus of his own student days reminded him of that period of hope and will; he felt at home once more in the city. This had not been his ideal, but he under-

stood the man and respected him. Content to live simply, unmarried, on the small salary that was paid for such purely scientific services, he went his way unswervingly in a noisy world, not distracted by trivial ambitions, dreaming the large dream of science, with its sharp outline of infinite detail.

"Well," Holden commented at the end, "you are doing something worth while — and there's no doubt about it, which is more than most men ever achieve."

"Oh, I don't know about that!" Graham replied with a dubious smile. "The big prizes always go to the other fellows, — men like Farrington, who know how to coin what knowledge they have."

"Who's Farrington?"

"One of Jenks's pets — they've appointed him this year to a chair in the school."

A look of disgust crossed his thin face, and he began the long tale of academic intrigue and diplomacy, revealing another side of the scientist's life. It was the old warfare between the "practical" men, like Dr. Jenks, who had controlled the school hitherto, and the younger men, ardent disciples of research, who despised "mere practitioners" and suspected what they called "commercial medicine." The men of the laboratory, forced to live meagrely on small salaries, with no public recognition, became bitter critics of those brethren of the craft who made large incomes and were often in the public eye.

"They ought not to be allowed to peddle themselves about for big fees when they teach in the school, using their connection with us to make money," Graham growled. As

Holden knew, the others might reply, "Our experience is very valuable to students. . . . The mere investigator, or the teacher, has no knowledge of men, no wide experience of cases, etc." So it went up and down the world, the warfare of the two ideals, or rather the struggle of the ideal with the comfortable compromises of personal success. And it would always be so as long as man's dual nature created the conflict. Meanwhile, how about ailing folk, who sought healing for their ills? They were going more and more to all sorts of quacks, mummers of words, faith healers, mind healers, massage tricksters, and bone manipulators. Ignorant men and women rejected both the scientist and the money-maker. And the healer of true skill and real knowledge was not produced in the schools.

"Those new institutions for research are doing the best work in medicine to-day," the young scientist concluded, "but the state ought to support all such work, and not let men take their bread and butter from some rich man's purse! One of these days the state will train all the doctors and support research. Then we'll get rid of the Farringtons and the Jenkses along with the rest of the parasites."

Like many men of his class he was an incipient socialist, trusting to the promise of a larger social ideal to evolve justice and order out of the confusion of the world.

"You threw it up!" Graham exclaimed at the end. "And how have you succeeded? I heard you were running some sort of health resort up north. That little ass Percy Farrold was in here this winter, talking a lot about what you did at your camp — what's it like?"

"Just a camp in the woods," Holden replied.

"Don't get into the sanitarium business," Graham warned gravely; "that is the last stage of medical prostitution."

"We are not there yet. We really try to make people well. . . . And we do sometimes. . . . Come and see us!"

"Perhaps I will, when I have finished this job and have time to take a vacation."

He adjusted the green shade over his eyes, and with a nod turned back to the laboratory bench.

Holden slowly retraced his steps to the hotel, meditating on his day. The impression of polished worldliness that Elport, with his selfish panic over his neglected son, his desire to get rid of "the creature" his boy had become involved with, had produced, had been somewhat erased by the sight of Graham at his bench. Yet the young scientist, with his harsh criticisms and ill-concealed envy of his more prosperous colleagues, also revealed a sordid side. The city world whipped men's appetites, it seemed, and sharpened their claws. Doubtless it had a more heroic side, but Holden, passing along the avenue in the twilight stream of hurrying people, longed for the large silence of his wilderness, — the simple, straightforward path of daily life therein. Not for him the ardors of the scientist, with his far-off, lofty goal, nor the coarse bustle of success, where men sold themselves piece by piece in a meaningless struggle for place!

In the morning he would give Elport the answer that was slowly formulating within him, and then go back to his sick about the old Spring. Thus tranquilly he solved the problem of life — to himself.

At the entrance of the great hotel he met his wife and Vera

Travers. Helen's pretty face was flushed: she had been shopping all day with her mother, and the bliss of this woman's sport, of which she had been deprived for two years, with the noise and the movement of the city, filled her with an excitement like wine. Every nerve in her responded to the constant stimulus of sight and sound, and she was talking fast.

"We're just going to have tea," she explained to her husband. "You must not run away again!"

She noticed the shrewd eyes of her friend travelling over the doctor's uncouth figure, from the soft felt hat to the ill-fitting, baggy trousers. She became acutely conscious of the sombre face under the long hair, and of the slouchy appearance of her woodsman husband here in the glittering lobby of the city hotel. She resolved that not another day should go by before a tailor had him in hand.

Vera Travers was seeking the man beneath the unfavorable exterior.

"It's rather different," she said, "from the last time we met!"

He understood and smiled back at her.

"You were in such a hurry then!" she continued.

"Was I?"

"Don't you remember? . . . Men never do, though!" They drifted on through the crowded corridors to a lofty, gaudy tea room,—"the Versailles room,"—where to the accompaniment of an excellent small orchestra a few hundreds of people were drinking tea, eating, and trying to talk to one another or amusing themselves by staring at their neighbors. A tall, handsome, perfectly attired man rose

from one of the small tables that he had been holding for the party.

"Gerald," Vera Travers murmured, "this is that famous doctor who married Nell!"

"Glad to meet you!"

It might have been the broker who married Sue, or the lawyer who married May,—it was all the same to Mr. Gerald Travers, "who did something in banking." He gave a shapely white hand to the doctor, his placid healthy face saying plainly enough, "What queer ducks Vera does get hold of!" He was an amiable husband, however, and fully conscious of his indebtedness to his generous wife. So he tried his best to make himself agreeable to his wife's friends, whoever they might be. He industriously pointed out to Helen the notabilities of the city to be seen at the neighboring tables, tagging them all quite correctly, as he had learned to do in the diplomatic service. And he ordered a new fashion of tea and displayed an unusual intelligence about cakes, which he had also acquired in the service of his country.

Holden gave him a sharp glance or two, as if he were asking himself how Vera, who seemed to be the least foolish of women, could have taken to herself such an obvious parasite. The wife beamed sympathetically out of her fine eyes upon her conventional husband. She was shrewd enough to divine exactly what the doctor was thinking about Gerald Travers, but she knew what Gerald was as a husband. Her marriage was not romance, but it was good sense. She was content.

Turning upon Holden she seemed to challenge him with

her eyes, as though to say, "Have you done better for my little Nell with your romance?"

"Helen seems to be so glad to get back to the city — she's like a child out of school!" she observed softly.

"Yes," the doctor answered, looking at his wife, who apparently did not find Gerald Travers in the least dull, "Helen likes the noise."

He glanced about the large room, with its pretentious elegance, false pillars of stucco, bronze ornaments, thick rugs and imitation tapestries, and at the people who were eating and gossiping, crowded together in the hot place at little tables. He examined these poor human beings with the sternly professional eye of the doctor, who could detect secret vices, hidden little indulgences, — could read the signs of outraged nature under the lines of the flesh.

"You mustn't be too hard on us," Vera Travers remarked. "We don't spend all our time like this, and we aren't all silly and weak."

"I didn't say so."

"You looked it."

Travers and Helen were debating the worth of a certain confection that the waiter was holding towards them. The music was tinkling forth voluptuous passages from a new opera. A throng of people surged through the room, seeking places.

"Women, you know," Vera continued, "can't keep always on the heights — nor men either, for that matter!"

The doctor refused the refreshment proffered by the waiter, and did not reply to this observation.

"Are you going to keep Helen up there in your fastness much longer?" she ventured.

“Why not?”

“She has so many friends here — she belongs here.”

“And I belong there.”

“Can’t you find a compromise?”

Holden shrugged his shoulders expressively, observing casually: —

“I expect to go back to the Lake to-morrow — for good.”

“Oh!” Vera Travers cried, with unfeigned alarm. “And my dinner party? . . . Of course you will do nothing of the sort.”

The two exchanged a challenge.

“Don’t you think,” Vera murmured gently, “that a man who marries a woman, — a woman like Helen, — owes something to his wife?”

“Owes what?” Holden demanded bluntly.

“Many things! Consideration — regard for her happiness — her wishes —”

“If she loves a man, her happiness must be his happiness.”

“Or his happiness her happiness — which?” she demanded with a lingering smile. “You are all egotists!”

Again the doctor shrugged his heavy shoulders, as if he disdained this trivial word play, but there lingered on his face a look of doubt. The woman’s thrust had pricked home.

“At any rate,” the lady concluded, masterfully, “you are going to dine with us on Friday and meet some pleasant people you ought to know!” With a final smile of assurance she was turning to the others, when the doctor remarked suddenly: —

“Do you see that woman at the next table — the one with

the long plumes? Look at her hands — they are claws! The hands of a degenerate. If that woman is not watched, she will commit a crime some day — if she hasn't already."

"That is Mrs. Noble Setton — old Bernard Lashman's youngest daughter," Mrs. Travers replied in a low tone that was meant to convey reproof.

"Who's he?" the doctor asked indifferently.

This time it was Mrs. Travers who shrugged her shoulders and did not answer. Presently Holden rose from his seat and with a muttered "Good-by!" strode recklessly out of the crowded room, hastily pulling down his old soft hat before he reached the door. The people at the little tables looked up as he passed and spoke to one another. . . .

Decidedly a difficult man to be married to, Vera Travers said to herself. She looked thoughtfully at the placid countenance of her Gerald and congratulated herself again. "Poor Nell!" she murmured, shaking her head.

Yet she liked the man. He might be good for anything — but for a husband!

VI

NEVERTHELESS, the Wild One, imperfectly tamed as Vera Travers now realized, was found in her drawing-room on the Friday evening with his pretty wife. The solution to the puzzle that his friend Elport had propounded had not been as easy to discover as he had expected. It had occasioned a brief journey to the college town where young Elport's siren resided, and several interviews of a perplexing nature. Possibly, also, that remark of Vera Travers concerning a wife's happiness had made its way into the inner consciousness of the Wild One, and he was trying in a groping manner to discover what his young wife, — his two years' companion, — really desired for herself. At any rate these last days he had said nothing about returning to the Lake, had occupied himself variously while his wife shopped and amused herself with old friends, and also had gone submissively wherever she had wished, — as to-night.

He sat glumly in a corner of the pretty drawing-room on one of the little gold chairs that threatened to break beneath his vigorous body, and looked over the company. They had been gathered for some time, and there was visible among the dozen guests the fatal signs of a pre-dinner boredom, which a hostess justly fears. Yet they waited for Someone, and at last he came. The man at the door of the room announced in a loud voice that acted like an electric shock upon the dull gathering, "Dr. and Mrs. Farrington!"

A swarthy, bearded man with keen little black eyes was bowing low over his hostess's hand and saying, while his eyes already roamed past her into the peopled room:—

“So sorry! Nina telephoned you?”

“No need—I saw it in the papers this morning.”

It had been announced in the press that Dr. Eliot Farrington had been called to Washington to attend a well-known public man, who had fallen suddenly ill after a banquet. Such little items of his personal movements often found their way into the newspapers and served to keep the great general public aware of his name. His enemies said that his secretary informed the reporters of all his doings, but of course a man of Farrington's prominence did not have to use such crude methods.

“I was lucky to get here at all!” he continued with a winning smile.

“Something was the matter with our car, Vera,” Mrs. Farrington remarked in a loud, positive voice. “It positively crawled.”

If Dr. Farrington with his handsome head of black hair just turning gray presented a picture of worldly elegance, his wife was a mere substantial lump of a woman with a plain face, a coarse complexion, and blunt manners. Yet she came of a very good family — much better than her husband's — and she had used her considerable social connection to advance her husband as far and fast as possible. Her large personal energy was doing its part valiantly in pushing the family cart: she was one of those wives who have their husbands' careers a little too obviously on their minds.

As for Dr. Eliot Farrington himself, he was a good example

of the new doctor, to be found perhaps in its full development only in the United States. There was not left in him the slightest trace of the barber-surgeon period of the profession — no obsequiousness, no sense of social inferiority to anybody. Nor was he of the familiar type of family doctor, although his field was general medicine. Elegant in appearance, distinguished in manner, especially with women, he was what Gerald Travers recognized as an "all-round man of the world" and enthusiastically excepted from the list of freaks that his wife occasionally expected him to endure at one of her "queer" dinners. Indeed, Dr. Farrington was able to hold his own with business men and look at the world as they looked at it. He speculated mildly in the stock market with the aid of Travers and usually with success.

Even Holden watched him with curiosity. The man's name was on every one's lips these days. During the comparatively few years since his return from Vienna he had made many powerful friends and had built up rapidly a reputation as diagnostician and consultant. He was to-day, without any doubt, the most marked of all the "rising men" in the profession. If scientists like Graham called his acquirements "book science," the public could not make the distinction between that and laboratory science and would not care if they could. Manner and personality, as Dr. Farrington often said, had most to do with the success of a modern physician in his profession. And Dr. Farrington's personality was a very winning one. No patient of his was ever made to feel that his troubles were due to his own self-indulgence and follies. The doctor's therapy was soothing and comforting, though costly. There was little of the

scientist in him, less of the seer, and nothing at all of the Puritan. . . .

As the Farringtons drew away from their hostess, they gave that instinctive, furtive glance over the human menu, with which the experienced diner-out tests his luck. The doctor nodded to Jenks, with whom he was on the best of terms, shook hands with Travers, whom he had telephoned that morning about the market before taking his train for Washington, and bowed profoundly when he was presented to the unknown little lady, Mrs. Holden, whom he immediately divined he was expected to take in to dinner.

And Helen, when he tucked her arm softly beneath his and bent toward her with his cordial smile, was instantly charmed by the distinguished stranger, as women usually were. She knew that he was exactly right, from his small pearl studs to his crisp cravat, and perforce contrasted him rapidly with the wrinkled figure of her husband across the table. Farrington's appearance showed what care and precision in the smaller details of dress can do even with the conventionalized garb of to-day. Any one anywhere could tell at a glance that this man had always had the habit of good clothes and good society, while the Wild One, in his ancient dress clothes and his cravat rumpled untidily about his high collar, betrayed at once the man unfamiliar with polite society.

His wife had tried her best to get him properly prepared for this dinner, which to her was a momentous occasion; but he refused to order new clothes, and had returned from a day spent at a hospital so late that he had had merely time to throw on the suit she had unpacked for him. It

was not a large matter, she knew, but she felt justifiably aggrieved with her husband because he had not taken more thought of his appearance among her friends, who might be of such service to them both. Her mother, resuming the vernacular of her youth, would have said, "You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear," and the young wife might have resented the remark. But it was something very like this that passed through her mind as she watched the Wild One glumly eating his way through his soup, while Vera struggled to entangle him in the general talk.

"And that is your husband?" Dr. Farrington asked, looking at Holden with keen scrutiny. "I am so glad to meet him! I have heard so much about you both from my wife. You know Vera Travers is an old friend of ours. . . . And I'm told that he is doing fine work!"

Doubtless he had heard from Jenks the tale of his operation upon the girl, who became his wife. But he phrased his remark in such complimentary guise that the young wife might feel that her husband was already of sufficient importance to be generally known. If Eric only would be gracious, she thought, and make a good impression when he came into personal talk with this charming and highly distinguished man!

"Tell me about your life up there in the woods. It sounds fascinating. . . . It's the sort of place I have always dreamed of, where one could do the things one really wanted to do," he sighed sentimentally.

Thus he drew from Helen a description of the Healing Spring, and the simple life they led there.

"Wonderful!" he exclaimed with a sigh at the end. "I

can see that your husband will make a great success of it. . . . I must get him to tell me about his cure. I want to know of just such a place as that for certain cases I have."

There was nothing insincere in all this, for Farrington was too good a doctor, too thrifty a man of the world, to waste any opportunity he might have of gaining information about "what was going on," a new "good thing," — whether stock or drug or man. So he devoted himself agreeably to the young wife of the obscure country doctor, whom he found quite "nice" and "intelligent," — described to her a famous cure in the Bavarian Alps that resembled what he supposed the Healing Spring might be, then told an amusing anecdote of the household where he had just been. "The women are all Christian Scientists, you know — I had to fight my way to the poor chap's bedside." Then he passed to the opera and flying machines, and when he gave his arm to conduct his companion back to the drawing-room she was very happy, and cast a beaming smile upon her husband and Vera.

This was the atmosphere that she had missed and unconsciously been pining for these past months, — the atmosphere of pleasant society, of the people "one ought to know," — and she admired again Vera's skill in accomplishing so much with her marriage venture, while she herself had done so little thus far with hers. And Gerald Travers, who had sat on her other side during dinner, was perfectly commonplace, while her husband was not that, — no, not that !

What passed among the men after the women went she did not discover, because Holden was never communicative about what bored him, and Vera was too kind to tell her

friend what she herself had learned from her husband. But apparently Holden had not tried to make things pleasant. He had met the first cordial advances of his distinguished colleague with a stony curtness that had discouraged even Farrington's determined sweetness of disposition and sent him across the table to talk stocks with Gerald Travers. Then he had fallen foul of the great Jenks over the latest theory out of Germany of psychotherapy, — the Socratic method of discovering the "hidden sorrows" of nervous patients. The backwoods doctor showed such acquaintance with the subject and such a power of vigorous statement, piercing the psychologic webs of the subtle German, that at last he had brought back Farrington to his end of the table, and when their host, who had been sleepily yawning over doctor talk, rose, the two city physicians in spite of their dislike of the rough stranger recognized that he was a man to be reckoned with.

"Your husband doesn't like me!" Farrington remarked to Helen on his return to the drawing-room, "but I find him most interesting — a strong man! We shall hear from him soon, I've no doubt. He ought to write for the journals."

These agreeable compliments the wife straightway repeated to her husband as they were driving back to their hotel.

"Ass!" Holden remarked contemptuously. "I haven't any theories, and that is why I can cure people instead of naming their diseases."

"I thought Dr. Farrington very interesting," his wife protested, "and so well bred."

"Yes, he dresses nicely," Holden answered, closing his eyes.

The wife believed that this was the moment when she should assert herself, and correct some misconceptions of her erratic husband. So, as the cab whirled them towards the hotel, she read him a sensible little lecture upon the uses and conveniences of good society, and described to him the folly of a contemptuous attitude towards the organized forces of ambition.

"They could do so much for you — all of them," she concluded, "if you would only be nice to them!"

"Those people help me? How?"

"Oh, in so many ways! Don't you see they have position — influence?"

"If I made them like me, they would give me some of their position?" he asked ironically.

"You are so difficult!" his wife complained.

A look of ironic amusement crossed his face, as he recalled what old Jenks had said that evening at dinner, apropos of certain remarks about socialism. "It was all idle talk," the wise doctor observed, "because the women would have none of it." Women believed in an established order where they took their places according to their men's rank.

By this time they had reached their room, and Helen was examining her face and neck in the mirror with her back to her husband. She was annoyed with him for the moment.

The room was littered with gowns and unopened bundles, — spoils of the week's vigorous shopping. There was not a chair nor a table on which some article was not deposited, and the bed was heaped high with a miscellaneous assortment of feminine adornment. Holden moved quietly about the room, his hands in his pockets, restlessly examining the con-

fusion. He picked up a dinner gown, then a package of baby clothes, a rich opera cloak that Helen had not been able to resist, and finally settled upon a pair of white silk stockings. He looked at these closely, a curious smile on his expressive lips, and drew them through his fingers slowly, reflectively.

"Eric," his wife remarked, her face still turned towards the mirror, "you must order some evening clothes at once — before the opera next week. That suit is positively ridiculous!"

Something that she saw in the mirror caused her to turn quickly and face her husband. He was still smiling, as he stroked the silk stockings.

"I shall not need it," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"I take the morning train for the Lake."

"But — but — how about Mr. Elport?"

He made a gesture with his hands that expressed finality.

"The boy is married to that woman — I found that out to-day. And she is not a bad sort. I won't take any part in separating them!"

"Isn't it awful — it will break his father's heart!" Helen exclaimed, her mind for the moment distracted from the personal issue. "Can't anything be done? It will ruin his life!"

"I don't know about that. She's quite as much of a person as he is, and he seems to care for her."

"But such a woman — with that past —"

"He married her because he was lonely — had been lonely all his life. I guess his father will have to stand it."

He spoke slowly, and the little smile seemed graven on his face. His wife knew that this smile was but the masque of a complex and, to her, inexplicable mood.

"Do put down those stockings, Eric!" she said impatiently, "and tell me what you mean to do."

"Exactly what I said — go home to my work. I've asked young Elport and his wife to go back with me."

He did not lay down the white silk stockings, and thereafter whenever the wife saw a pair of white silk stockings she remembered this crisis in her married life. She felt that now, if ever, she must make an effort, exert her will. If her husband took this step, he would offend Horace Elport past pardon. . . .

All this pleasant evening she had been forming happy little plans for a prosperous turn to their fortunes. She had meant that he should accept Elport's suggestion and assist him in separating his weak son from the undesirable wife. Then, on their return from Europe, they would of course establish themselves in the city, like Vera, like the Farrings. It had all seemed possible and promising! And now with one brutal, irrational sweep of his will, this incomprehensible man had brushed her little castles from the table. Why? What happened at the dinner, before or afterwards, that had caused such an illogical determination? She could never know — might never understand the complexities of this man's brain — and she must therefore be doomed always to surprise and disappointment in her life.

"I can't possibly start to-morrow morning," she said shortly, "and you know it!"

"Then you can stay here."

The words spoken calmly, equably, might mean little or nothing, but she felt that they revealed a great gulf. She had never quarrelled with her Wild One—rarely disputed his will. She had been too easily influenced by him, she often said to herself. She realized it now that she saw what other women could do with their husbands.

He had declared his purpose not merely of spoiling her own good time, but also of ruining her plans for their betterment in the world. She felt outraged, aggrieved. Come what might she would not yield at this crisis without battle.

"You know that I can't stay in this hotel after you leave!"

"You can go to your mother's then — you have wanted to visit her for a long time."

"Why do you do such a silly thing — just to make me unhappy?"

"No — not that," he said, and in the glint of his deep eyes she felt the antagonism of their two wills,—the fierce man's will against her soft, obstinate woman's will.

As another part of the hidden complex in his mind came to the surface, he remarked:—

"I'm going back to work, — to make some money to pay for this!" He pointed with a slow, inclusive sweep of his hand to the scattered spoils in the room.

"You could make a lot of money if you did what Mr. Elport asked you."

"Become a rich man's decoy? . . . When I sell myself," he said sternly, "I make my own terms — do it my own way."

Sell himself! It sounded very dreadful to her, as if she were forcing him to sacrifice his honor. Her little world

seemed swimming around her, and she clutched vainly for support.

“Eric!” she cried. “Don’t you love me any more?”

“What has that to do with it?”

He avoided her outstretched arms, and brushing some parcels from a chair sat down. At that moment his heart had no love for her of any sort, and she knew it.

“I can pay for these things myself,” she said proudly, “with my own money.”

“Your mother’s money,” he corrected.

“Why do you always make such a fuss about money?” she retorted disdainfully.

It seemed to her a sign of his inferior breeding that he should reduce matters thus plainly to dollars and cents. She could not realize that her father and her mother had done the same thing all their lives with thrifty precision; for she belonged to the second generation of success and had been nurtured in an aristocratic indifference to the terms of money.

“You spoil everything with your silly pride about using my money,” she said. “We might do so much — be so happy, if you were only a little more like other people!”

“Like Gerald Travers and the Farringtons? . . . Did we marry for that?”

“I married for love!” she replied quickly. She was immensely proud of her act of romantic courage, and cherished still the sentimental ideal. She wanted him to feel somewhat the sacrifices she had made for it. But he merely shrugged his shoulders.

“Try to keep it alive then!” he exclaimed, and turned towards the door.

But she would not let him go. It did not end thus, not for hours, not until the two in the silence of the early morning had looked deep into their hearts and seen from fresh angles the tangled problem of two human beings, who must somehow harmonize their warring wills in this world of reality. Again and again she said, with a rising note of desperation in her voice, "It just means you don't care for me any longer. I had better leave you at once — then you will be free to do always as you wish." Desperate threat that she had no intention of fulfilling, used merely to reduce the stony mood of the man to her emotional plane ! For love was the solvent of all disagreements, she felt. She must pour out for her intractable male the love philter, blind his pitiless eyes, lull him. When a second and a third time she came back to this point, — seemed unable to look beyond it, — he said irritably, "Very well, let it be the end — if that is what you want !" and strode from the room.

She stood aghast, looking into the mirror with frightened eyes. Had she broken the charm ? She felt utterly weak.

Thus it would be apparent to any clear-sighted observer that the supreme human experience of personal romance had come again near shipwreck in the case of these two. Even the casual outsider, judging from surface indications, as the women at Vera Travers's dinner that evening judged, might pronounce, "They are not suited for each other — that is all !" It is an easy judgment. Vera Travers herself, who had seen the white flame of this passion at its purest, might have her misgivings and say to herself, "They are not fitted to dwell together, by training, habits, tempera-

ment." Yet the truth was that these two were no more unfit for the task than most highly charged men and women. Possibly if Vera herself had undertaken the experiment of living with an uncompromising Idealist, she would have succeeded better than her simpler friend. But Vera would never have tried such an experiment. . . .

It seemed, in sum, that nature had been at her tricks again. With her ironic indifference to personal results, she had caught these two defenceless beings — man and girl thrown together by fate under the highest stimulus of romantic circumstance, — just at seeding time ! And according to her wont she had filled their eyes with the golden dust of illusion, so that they could see nothing singly. In a short two years the dust had been washed from their eyes, with some tears for the woman, alas ! and they were now revealed to each other in the hard light of spiritual nakedness. The girl, that pure vessel of a divine flame exalted and worshipped by the man in his need for worship, had proved herself after becoming woman and mother to be just good human flesh, moulded very much after the fashion of her mother, whom she appeared wholly unlike. From that mother she had inherited her instincts and her conventions as to what her life should be. And the man, — ardent lover and worshipper of the divine in her and himself, — the Ideal, — has clearer eyes than hers. The inner force of his nature must gain its end by the sacrifice of her whom he has adored, or of something greater than himself within his own soul. Little room for amiable compromises here ! The soft arms about his neck are choking not him, but something more than him. They are dragging him gently

into those well trodden ways of life that women understand and instinctively select for their own preservation. He must become a Farrington — or worse.

In days happily gone by for all civilized folk, the man caught in such a dilemma would doubtless have beaten his woman to a cruel submission and dependence, thereby gaining a dubious triumph for his will at the expense of something crushed forever. Conceivably the woman in question might have lived out her life more happily after such a brutal conquest. But the world has slowly struggled forth from the squaw era, and must perforce accord more and ever more rights to these bearers of the sacred seed, however unfitted they may be at present for their liberty and self-direction. Tradition has taught them for generations to work by fraud and wile, and their instinct warns them against the ideal. All prolonged contest with them will end in the deterioration of the man. He must either cut the knot or submit as gracefully as he can to their notion of civilization.

And so in truth must this Wild One determine at once what he will do. If he has any great business in life, — if he is in truth to be a healer, — he must tear himself, here and now in this hotel room, from the arms that caress and bind, and go about his work forthwith instead of attempting the killing path of compromise. It would doubtless hurt the woman cruelly, but in the end the total of human pain might be less and much human disaster averted.

In such dilemma tradition and convention are absolutely on the woman's side, and it is well they should be. For the end that she blindly fights for, — civilization, society as it is, success for herself in the world and her children, call it

what we will, — are things the common man is fitted to comprehend and admire. . . . Early that morning Helen came to his room, her lovely hair curling loosely over her white neck, and put her arms softly about him.

“I will go back with you,” she murmured brokenly. “I shan’t care for anything here when you are gone. . . . Eric, you must love me — a little !”

The man, seeing her tear-stained face, her gentle body already showing slightly the curve of her second maternity, took her in his arms and soothed her like a child, comforted her and bade her stay on with her friends for a time. The terrible thing was to hold her thus and feel in his heart merely pity for her frail, childish being, pity for the creature he had somehow caught in his will and crushed. No rush of love, no fire of devotion !

And she, simple as was her understanding, could perceive dimly the fierce will of the man fighting to save his soul, to slip the silken cords in which she would bind him. He was fleeing to the north as the wild bird flies to the wilderness, in order that he might live, fearing that if he should yield to her desire and try to be like the Farringtons of the city, he would become less than they — mere nothing. . . .

“No, I’ll try to get ready and go back with you !”

“You don’t really mean that — you had better stay and have your fun out.”

“Oh, if you want me to stay —”

He led her gently from the room. An hour later he got aboard the North Star Express alone. It was very nearly two years to a day since he had left the great city before with the woman of his dreams by his side.

VII

THE second child came in due time — the child of passion. It too was a girl, a dark little thing with broad forehead and deeply serious eyes, "all the world like her father," as the nurse said. And this time the mother was not distressed because her child proved to be a girl. As she wrote Vera Travers, who with Nina Farrington had made her a long visit at the Lake that summer, "It is nice that they are both girls, and so near together. They will be such companions for each other and for me. I'll bring them both out at the same time." . . .

While she lay convalescing her busy mind went forward happily into the years to that time when she saw herself in her proper position in the world from which she came, with her two daughters at her side. It never entered her mind that these two small seedlings of herself might themselves rebel and choose another life from the one she designed for them. There was but one good, as she thought, and that was to do, so far as circumstances permitted, what her mother had done before her, what her women friends were now doing. Like the true woman she was, she disliked revolt, innovation. "I want my girls to be like other people," she wrote Vera, "and have in life what other girls are having." Thus she unconsciously belied the romance of which she herself had been capable. . . .

The white-robed nun, who supplemented the services of old Scotch Nan, came and went softly about her room, shading her eyes from the too intense sunlight of the October morning. Within the nun's starched coif, on her colorless face, there was no sign of rebellion. She wore the badge of a complete religious self-effacement. Sister Monica had long since entered into her great silence. The young mother pondered sometimes about sister Monica's solution of life, and felt that it was unnatural. She wished her daughters to be mothers like herself, only with more stable positions in the world.

Thus she lay luxuriously in her soft bed, cushioned with the downiest pillows, wrapped in the fleeciest blankets that Mrs. Goodnow's experience could provide — and mused upon life. There was a boundless latent energy in her after this second birth, as if all her woman's powers had been thoroughly awakened at last. She schemed an entire management of her future life, unrolling it chapter by chapter, filling it with the lives of these two seedlings whose directing providence she had become. Already the focus of her own being had shifted once, — from herself to her lover, which was scarcely a shift after all, — but now it was shifting a second time momentously — to her children. Hereafter she would consider everything exclusively from their point of view, and as far as she could she would bend her little world to their needs. That was her woman's instinct — and duty, of course.

The lover had faded away with the dubious mists of her morning: the husband remained as a social instrument of her necessity.

When he had left her in the city that spring morning after their stormy discussion, she had seriously contemplated never returning to him, confessing her failure before her friends, and trying to patch out her life alone the best she could, — “devoted to her child or children.” She had shown her depression as she lamely explained her husband’s hasty departure to her mother, and the shrewd old woman had growled, “Crazy brute! Now you see, Nell, what it means to marry a man beneath you!” But she had stoutly defended him, ashamed to admit her mistake, shocked indeed by her mother’s crude phrasing of it. With her old friend Vera, however, she had coasted much nearer the fatal shore of confession of her wifely dissatisfactions. She said her husband was “erratic,” did not pretend that there had been any good reason for his sudden departure, and betrayed plainly her wistful envy of her friend’s superior happiness with the stupid Gerald. But Vera — wise woman — would not encourage this weak vein. Probably the doctor knew best what was right for him, she told the young wife, and if later an opportunity should come that would bring him advantageously into a larger world, he would accept it. She had faith in the Wild One as a man. Anyway, women must do the best they could with the male material marriage revealed to them, and have patience — woman’s surest weapon against fate.

She had not been ready, in truth, to admit to herself, — hurt as she was, — the final failure of her romantic ideal. She wrote her husband almost daily of all her doings, and as the weeks passed and the new child was growing large within her the sense of her bond to her mate became stronger.

However far away he was, however harsh, he was the father of the life within her, and womanlike she obeyed healthily the secret call to that mate. For she was normally monogamic, — married once and for all, she said to herself with deep pride. So after Nora's wedding in early June she had gone back to the northland in spite of all that her mother could do to keep her daughter with her. Before Helen left the city she secured promises from Vera and Nina Farrington (with whom she had become rapidly intimate) to visit her later in the summer without troublesome husbands. Her intercourse with these two examples of successful wives had been developing to her ideas. Especially had the blunt, masterful Mrs. Farrington showed her that position which a good wife should assume, — the directing force in the marriage partnership. "I made Eliot do that," or "I'll make Eliot do that," or "I should never think of my husband's doing that!" — such phrases were ever on her lips. Another of her remarks was also illuminating, "We couldn't do such a thing, because of our position, you know, my dear." And "a prominent man like Eliot has to think of appearances." That was what Eric Holden had once described as the game of social bluff, — a game the Farringtons, it seemed, played most successfully. They "bluffed" the world into taking them for more than they actually were worth, in money, influence, reputation. And the world, which likes to be bluffed boldly, accorded them in good measure their assumptions! Helen admired this force.

"Of course, my dear, you'll be coming to the city this winter for a good visit," Mrs. Farrington said to her young hostess as she left.

"If the doctor will let me!" she replied gayly.

"Bring him with you — it will do him good. You know it doesn't do to live off by yourself in a place like this too long. People forget you so quickly," the practical lady warned.

"I know it!" Helen sighed.

"She's coming to me with both babies for a month anyway," Vera said, kissing her friend good-by.

The two women had enjoyed their visit greatly, delighting in the oddity of the Healing Spring, where there happened to be some agreeable semi-invalids at the time. They found the Eyrie altogether charming — as a summer camp — and congratulated their hostess on her comfortable establishment. "You have given it a touch, my dear!" Mrs. Farrington said. The first time she saw the stone house on the cliff she had exclaimed, "What a quaint little hut! And did you really live in it the first year?"

"Of course."

"I should think you would find it pleasanter to be removed from the patients. Sick people get on your nerves if you have them about all the time. I never go near the hospital. . . . A man must find his home a relief from his job."

Vera merely smiled. . . .

One thing Helen had determined upon after her visit to the city, and that was to make herself thoroughly comfortable. She had brought back with her a man cook and his Alsatian wife, who could serve as her personal maid. "If you are going to spend your life in the wilderness, you might as

well make yourself comfortable," Mrs. Goodnow had said. Vera had found her the ideal woman for nursery governess. "Really, you know, a lady, refined and cultivated, with the languages; and you can't begin too young with children to give them the languages."

Holden, who at this period of his career made his patients, rich and poor alike, work hard with their own hands and do for themselves as much as possible, — for the moral as well as the physical benefits of hard labor, — was moved to comment somewhat ironically upon the luxurious footing of his own household. But Helen, fortified now by fresh examples, met him with the positive assertion that they could not live "decently" in the woods with less service. "Rather a far cry from the days of the smoky coffee-pot and the log fire, with old Gray Jack's fried trout and soda biscuit!" Dr. Percy jeered. Nevertheless he and the other men in the neighborhood frequented the house and praised the cooking, and the wines which came from the well-known house in the city that Mrs. Goodnow had always patronized. Helen, whose standards were now fixed, was proud of her establishment. "Of course, my dear," she would say to all objections, "if we really are as poor as all that!" Then the doctor fled to his den at the Spring, vanquished. That is the feminine thrust that the Idealist can least well withstand. It pierces him at a weak spot.

After all the tempestuous feelings of the crisis in the hotel bedroom, the wife could not see that matters had changed materially between herself and her husband. She found him hard at work over his patients on her return from the city, and Dr. Percy reported uninterrupted prosperity at the

Spring, increasing repute, more applications than ever. Latterly the doctor had immersed himself in the new ideas prevalent in the medical world upon psychotherapy. It seemed that his cases were becoming more and more of the nervous order, exclusively, as the Spring drew its votaries from the large cities, from the higher classes of society. And to meet their needs the doctor was led to experiment after his own manner with the different methods in vogue in this restless age, when men, having abandoned their purely religious faith, are seeking a basis of faith in the physical life about them, trying to create strong bodies, to make money by the aid of the spirit, — seeking ever the talisman, the magic that will raise them.

All this appealed to the healer in him. His work, as he had once told his wife, was chiefly with the will, the source of all human power. To arouse the will, to stimulate it, to train it, perfect it, increase its force, — that was the subtle task that he set himself with each patient. First he must detect what inhibited the will or paralyzed it or distorted its function, thus destroying life, and then patiently, by physical means and psychic means, discover what in each case would remove the obstruction, and restore the patient to his normal state of will, and add to his inherent power.

His handling of Elport's weak wastrel of a son was typical. He induced the boy to bring his wife into the woods, much to the father's disgust and anger. Then he studied the pair, taking them with him on an expedition into a new part of the wilderness, camping with them, and finally leaving them for a time to rough it by themselves. He soon learned more about the son than the father had ever known. Nothing of

all the golden fruits of civilization that had been offered to the boy had been suited to his nature. It was a case of complete indigestion with resultant excesses that had ended in the dubious marriage. If anything was to become of him, he must start afresh almost from the beginning, with the companion he had weakly blundered upon.

All this Elport came reluctantly to perceive when finally he accepted the doctor's urgent invitation to the Lake.

"Buy them that ranch the boy wants," Holden counselled. "Send them there and let them work it out together. Harry has never had a chance — nor has she!"

"But you know —" Elport protested.

"Yes, I know all there is to know about her. . . . She may prove the weaker — I doubt it. If she leaves him, if she takes him back where he was, why then you will be right and I wrong. Then you can buy him a d'vorce. But I think she will stick, and help him make the new life — try it!"

With misgivings Elport followed the advice, no other immediate solution offering itself. At least there would be no scandal this way. A year later when he met the doctor's wife in the city he said to her, "Tell your husband I think he was right. He worked a real miracle that time! He saved my boy. . . . I have just come back from the ranch. Harry is becoming a man, at last."

At this time, moved by gratitude for what the doctor had done for him, Elport opened an account in Holden's name, investing in it "what any other doctor would have made me pay!" as he explained to the wife. "It may be useful to him some day — I hope so. He's the kind of man who

will die in a garret, if we don't look out for him." Helen was much pleased, and she felt more comfortable about the bills she had incurred lately. Elport was a man of the world: he recognized the proper values of things. She was glad that they had such a capable friend, and that he had not been hopelessly estranged by her husband's erratic course.

She was at a loss to know why, having made such a success with young Elport, he should refuse another patient, who arrived at the Lake with a letter from Dr. Farrington and begged Holden to take him in. Farrington described this Payson as a member of a prominent family, a delightful man socially, with brilliant prospects, who unfortunately had become addicted to morphia. The doctor would not let him spend the night at the Spring, but packed him back across the Lake after a brief interview. Helen, who had caught sight of the handsome and elegant stranger, was much annoyed, and she feared that the Farringtons would be displeased by such a summary treatment of their protégé.

"I want Farrington to understand that I am not running a dope cure," the doctor explained to her bluntly. "The man is putty — I can do nothing for that kind." Yet he accepted a poor teacher from a small southern college, who had somehow heard of the doctor and found his way to him, partially demented, with settled melancholia. He perceived beneath this poor fellow's unattractive exterior the sort of material that he could mould. His pride, it seemed, was to give himself to "those who are worth while,"—men and women who had the character and the ability to help themselves acquire sanity and health. If circumstances were

forcing him to keep a sanitarium, it should be a retreat for the elect.

"It's what I call spiritual snobbery," Dr. Percy remarked ruefully, discussing this new manifestation of the doctor's eccentricity with his wife. "He throws out Payson, and takes in the professor — discrimination in souls."

It seemed to the young wife a foolish refinement. Payson was very rich and able to pay well for what he got. If they were to be in the business, they might as well make it pay. Of late she was becoming interested in the money side of life, for she had her children to think of. . . .

That winter the doctor's wife made a long visit in the city, leaving her husband in his snowy isolation. Early in the spring he came down to fetch her and the children home, and this time he tarried in the city for several weeks, visiting the hospitals, seeing doctors, consulting old patients and examining new ones. "He's getting more human," Vera Travers pronounced. "Why, he's almost social! . . . He'll be a fashionable doctor yet, Nell — I suppose that's what you want him to be?"

There was malice in the question, but the wife replied promptly, "I'd like him to be like Dr. Farrington."

"No!" Vera mused. "He'll never be that."

The crisis, which had seemed so momentous to the young wife a year ago, was now happily passed, and her little bark was swimming safely towards the placid waters of middle life. She had a growing confidence that she could steer it, with her larger experience, through any future rapids. She returned to her northern home with content for another

summer. It was no longer the frontier, even to the city eye, that it had once been. The lumber camps had altogether disappeared, having stripped the forests from the hills, leaving here and there patches of first growth to witness their devastation. Several large summer camps had been started on the shores of the Lake, and there was a social life of a sort. Civilization had at last laid its taming hand upon the wilds. There was telephone and telegraph as well as railroad. Even Mrs. Goodnow might have been satisfied.

VIII

IT matters little where it may start, the modern hospice for the sick — the Sanitarium — must descend, as the young scientist had said to Holden, and become in the end the medical house of prostitution. It may have risen in the genius of a great doctor, it may have sprung from purest ideals of service, truth, honesty — as did the Healing Spring. But it must inevitably pass, it would seem, by gradations more or less rapid to a common trade. It carries in itself the seed of moral decay, because it involves the base bargain of money for life. It is the house of sale where the divine gift is bartered for the thirty pieces of silver.

However that may be, the gross truth was hidden for the present from the eyes of all that sought the Healing Spring. These were the palmy days of its growing reputation, its greatest apparent efficiency, if not its greatest money success. That fame which the fat little doctor had so confidently predicted had found the Healer out. He was doing "something different," something apparently obscure and magical. He gave few drugs or none at all: he broke the conventions of medicine, and in an age that was weary of the pretensions and failure of science he seemed to offer a mysterious solution for the ailments of humanity. Patients flocked to the hotels at the Settlement and were ferried across the Lake to Holden's Camp, as the place became known, in search of the doctor,

who received them or rejected them arbitrarily according to his will, — according to whim, some said. Of those he took under his charge he exacted complete obedience, — abdication of the will it was said ; he set them mean tasks, neglected them or abused them, but he rarely sent them back as they had been. Some reported that his charges were outrageous, and others that they could not get a bill. Some said they went for the benefit of the waters — “good for chronic rheumatism, neuritis, sciatica, diabetes, etc,” — the ills of a sedentary and overfed people. Others never saw the famous Healing Spring.

The doctor's reputation grew with the fame of the Spring. He was reported generally to be a queer, odd fish, a brute, a savage, but surely a genius. In all the impalpable ways in which fame spreads about the round globe, his name travelled on the lips of those he had cured, even of those who had come to him and failed to be received. The diverse currents of human gossip vibrated with report of this wild Healer of the north with his strange hospital camp beside the beautiful Lake. Legends of him arose, and of the wonders he worked. At last the wave of notoriety broke at his door when a metropolitan newspaper sent an investigating journalist to the Spring.

“I told you so !” Dr. Percy, who had entertained this news' scavenger, generously proclaimed. “You can't hide any good thing under a bushel, or in the woods. In the Sahara, at the North Pole, the doctor would be found out — sooner or later. All he has to do is to set up his tent in the wilderness — doesn't have to hang out a sign !”

The austerity of the life that he imposed — the famous

disciplines — helped to attract the weak and the ailing. Some called him brutal. But even the self-indulgent, coming from the hands of obsequious practitioners, liked the scourge, felt the tonic of bare truth-telling. There was perhaps the subtle pleasure of martyrdom — especially for women, and more and more women had become patients at the Spring.

There came a very great lady, who after much entreaty, intrigue, and recommendation had been admitted to the camp. She reported to her friends that she was given a bough bed on the dirt floor of a cabin and told to wash her own clothes in the lake.

“Fancy ! And before all the others, too ! A washer-woman — what is the sense of that ?”

This one was ignominiously expelled because she stayed abed and bribed old Gray Jack to fetch her breakfast.

It would seem that a habit of tyranny was growing upon the man as he became successful, a desire to rule. He could be tender with the weak and forlorn, — pitiful, gentle, understanding. These still called him the Healer and professed belief in the power of his touch, his mere presence as he visited their rooms on his rounds. “He can read your heart through the flesh and bones,” they said. “His look burns into you and reveals.”

Extravagances and redundances of admirers, out of which spring legends even to-day ! Did the man himself hear them ? Did they affect him, give him over-confidence, fill him with pride ? If he were austere with his patients, he was surely austere with himself. He labored day and night, and no longer fled to the woods as formerly, but spent all his days with his patients.

That humble scientist, Graham, dweller in the laboratory, coming northwards on a vacation, tarried a day at the Lake to see his friend's famous establishment. Holden took him about the Healing Spring. It was now a pleasant, busy camp, with a number of little wooden houses beneath the trees, with bath-house and hospital and mess room for the nurses, a good operating room, and all the appliances of modern medicine.

"Quite a plant you have here," the city man remarked as he left. "It must pay!"

Holden nodded impatiently. He knew what the other meant; he was reading the signs of the medical house of prostitution. Some said that it paid enormously, others that the doctor was a poor man. But Helen, whose growing needs demanded a good bank account, knew what it was. Of course it paid!

IX

HELEN, who with her many long visits to the city to see her mother and friends had adjusted herself quite happily to the life that fate had marked out for her, began to have a new preoccupation. What was to become of the little girls? They must be educated. Not merely learn what the excellent Mme. Verne could give them, but be given the larger opportunities of life.

"The girls cannot be brought up *here* much longer," she said positively to her husband.

"Why not?"

"It's not a suitable life for girls," she said impatiently.

"They have plenty to eat and wear and fresh air and exercise — what more do they need?"

"They must be educated."

"Well, there is a good school over in Blakely," the father said indifferently.

"School at Blakely! . . . Please be serious, Eric! . . . How about companions? Wild animals?"

"There are children at Blakely — we have some at the Spring too —"

"Invalids!"

"We'll bring all you want from the city — there are plenty would be glad to come."

"Anybody's children!"

The scorn and disgust of the tone, the flash of the eye, the

stretch of the arm, as if drawing the two little ones to her, indicated the aristocratic faith. How could the granddaughters of the president of the Produce Bank be brought to maturity properly in this backwoods environment with any chance companions?

"Please be serious, Eric!" . . .

Husband and wife had come away together, alone, to climb the slope of Macatawa. It had been an idea of hers, — a sentimental one long cherished, — to sleep out in the woods with her husband again, as they had often done in the early days of their marriage. She meant to camp at the very spot near Elk Lake where she had first taken her lover in her arms in the red, red dawn. Such melancholy revivals of sentiment please woman's heart!

On one excuse or another the doctor had put off the expedition until the end of the summer, and at last had yielded to her insistence with no great enthusiasm. The summer season — always busy now, for the sick then ventured freely into the country — had been a very trying one for the doctor. For the first time he had consented to visit patients outside his own camp, at the hotels in the Settlement, and this daily journey across the Lake had taxed his strength. He had been obliged to trust more and more to his assistants, Dr. Percy and another young fellow whom he had taken from the medical school. That meant, in brief, that he was spreading himself thinly over a larger surface of effort, was applying himself to each problem with less undivided interest and energy. He knew it. And he also was aware dimly that beneath all pretext he was doing it for money. As he gave less of himself to his sick, he perforce had given more medi-

cine, — had fallen back on what once he would have called the chicanery of the profession, diet, massage, drugs, — all the devices that produce quick spectacular results, that keep the confidence of the sick in the physician.

So he was silent, thoughtful, — glum, his wife thought, as he often was latterly.

The summer had been a trying one to her also. After a very hot spring there had come a long drought when the woods seemed to shrivel and burn and the air to lose all its usual fragrant vigor. Then there had been an unpleasant social disaster at the Spring. One of the patients, — a quite fashionable woman, whom she had in the first instance induced her husband to consider favorably, — had wounded her pride. Mrs. Laforge had treated her with condescension, patronized her, and the doctor's wife, accustomed to play the lady bountiful, the gracious hostess among the invalids, to pick her associates and make much of her invitations to the Eyrie, had engaged in struggle with the assuming stranger and been worsted. Mrs. Laforge, who had captured the most attractive of the pretty little bungalows and established herself quite cosily with her own maid, had formed her circle among the more able-bodied patients, and had detached insensibly the most interesting men from the Eyrie, — in a word had offered battle to the mistress of the Lake and routed her shamefully, thanks to her larger social experience, and the prestige of her well-known position in the city. At first Helen had affected to ignore her disaffection, but when the nurses and the doctors began to carry gossip, she appealed to her husband. He had been irritable, as he was frequently these days, due to overwork as well as to inner struggles that

she knew nothing of, and had declared that he would get rid of all the women patients. In the end she had made him see that Mrs. Laforge must leave, and he had discharged her, to the great scandal of the little community. He had sternly quelled the gossip by declaring that he would not accept another woman as patient at the Spring. It was a threat that could not be carried out, of course. Altogether the harmony, the high atmosphere of peace that was supposed to rest upon the Healing Spring, had been thoroughly disturbed. . . .

They toiled on through the slashings and waste timber of the lower slopes. The day was hot and sultry, and the thick haze of smoke which had been hanging about for weeks obscured the view of the Lake that they should have. The smoke seemed thicker to-day than ever and more sharply pungent the farther they penetrated the woods. The fires, set by careless campers earlier in the season, had been spreading for weeks to the north and west, many miles away, and must be coming nearer to the mountain. They were obliged to rest frequently in order to breathe more easily, and this conversation had taken place in one of the pauses, while they sat in the dry run of what had once been a trout brook. Helen, who had grown appreciably stouter of late, felt the effort of the ascent.

“Please be serious, Eric!” she repeated, raising herself upon an elbow and turning her face towards her husband. “I almost never see you these days alone, and we must talk such things over like husband and wife.”

She had in mind another, bolder scheme that she wished to broach, and had contrived this expedition not merely for sentimental reasons.

He shrugged his shoulders, as though to say, "It always comes out the same — you do what you like with the girls."

"We'll make good little squaws of the kiddies," the doctor remarked idly, as if he refused to concern himself deeply in the education of two children of four and five years. "Put 'em in moccasins and skins and let 'em run the woods with old Jack. They'll be worth while when they're grown women."

"If you think I shall let the girls waste their lives here —" she began carelessly.

"Has it been so bad for you?" he demanded quickly.

"We must do better for the girls," she replied evasively. "Every one wants the best for their children!"

"The best!" he exclaimed in a low tone of irony and doubt.

"Yes, the best," she repeated positively. "Do all one can for them, of course, and fortunately we have the means and the friends to give them their little place in the world."

He rose and turned up the mountain. She followed, developing this theme on which she seemed to have thought much.

They reached the broad shoulder of the mountain, from which there was usually to be had a clear view to the north for unnumbered miles, but the smoky twilight had begun to settle down before they could find the little lake they sought. They peered into the murk that was being driven down the wide valley by a strong wind. Every now and then a dull red flame burst through the grayness of the atmosphere.

"The fire has eaten its way over the divide," Holden said. "The wind is stronger. If it should veer a point or two, it

will sweep down through the notch to the Lake. . . . We had better not go farther," he added, as another of the dim beacon fires of the north burst forth.

"You don't think there is any real danger, Eric?" Helen asked anxiously, thinking of the Eyrie and the children.

"It depends on the wind," he replied. "This stuff we have been coming through would burn like chaff. If the fire once got through the notch, it would sweep the Settlement and all about the Lake!"

She trembled at the thought.

"It might be better so," Holden muttered to himself. "Sweep it all away!"

"Let us go back at once," she said, turning.

"We couldn't find our way five rods, in this dark! We must wait until dawn before trying it."

So they camped for the night where they stood beside a damp bog hole from which they contrived to scoop a cup of muddy water. Helen rolled herself in her blanket and soon fell asleep from weariness after the exhausting climb. The last she saw of her husband was a blanketed figure crouching against a dead log, looking far away into the valley where the points of dull red light glowed through the dark.

"Come to bed," she murmured sleepily, thinking of some old memory that could not be quite revived, — a picture she had of her husband watching like that while she slept. . . .

When she opened her eyes rain was falling on her face steadily, and in the gray gloom she could see her husband, wrapped in his blanket, standing above her.

"Eric!" she murmured, for the moment forgetting where

she was, believing that they were once more young lovers in the wilderness. "Eric, I'm so sleepy!"

"It is time to be off," he said hurriedly. "The rain has saved us!"

She threw off her blanket and struggled drowsily to her feet. Below, much nearer than the night before, could be seen the red points of smouldering fires. The sweep of the scourging fire had been stayed, just in time. There was no wind, and the fine rain fell persistently.

Holden made the pack and flung it on his shoulders, and they set forth down the mountain in the rain. It was a dreary end to the little excursion that she had so carefully planned.

"Some day," Holden remarked grimly, "the fire will get in here and burn the country to the rock! It was only a matter of a few hours this time."

"There are always forest fires," she answered easily.

"But never so close before!"

As she followed his long stride through the dead brush, she was thinking that she had not yet broached her scheme. She was tired of her life at the Lake. This summer had especially been irksome to her, with the Laforge affair and the long weeks of heat and drought and smoke. And she had been disappointed in an expected visit from Vera Travers, who had gone abroad with her husband. For the last few years she had made it a custom to spend a part of each winter in the city, at her mother's and with her friends. But this autumn she planned to go abroad with her mother for the whole season. She thought her husband might follow her in the early spring and bring her back, — that was what

so many American husbands had the habit of doing. Nina Farrington was to be in Europe this winter as well as the Traverses and others whom she knew.

"Eric," she suggested, as they got well out of the woods. "Let us not go home for breakfast. Let's go back to the stone house! We have everything with us, and it will be so cosey to cook our breakfast up there as we used to."

He made no remark, and when they reached the Cove she took the path across the sands and up the steep cliff. It was still early and the invalids in the cabins under the trees were not yet awake. A night nurse was leaving the little diet kitchen with the weary step of a long vigil. Otherwise the little group of cabins and bungalows slept peacefully in their bright flower beds. The rain had stopped, and as husband and wife mounted the steep path to their old home the sun struggled up out of its watery bed and shed a few red beams upon the dripping trees and the dark walls of the pretty cottages.

"It looks very nice," Helen remarked contentedly, thinking of the wild thicket that had once been there, of the tents scattered among the trees, and of the "ragged regiment" that had occupied them. Surely the Healing Spring had made wonderful progress latterly, and it was bringing in a great deal of money to its proprietor. That was one of the remarks that Mrs. Laforge was reported to have made, — "The Spring had been touched by a woman — and now flowed pure gold!" . . .

The path to the broad door of the stone house was covered with weeds and long dusty wreaths of shrivelled vines hung down from the eaves, completely blotting out the windows.

Nobody had occupied the little house since the waitress had given birth to her feeble child there years before. For a time Helen had consciously avoided going near the place, and latterly she had simply forgotten all about it. A new and easier path had been made from the Eyrie to the Spring so that it was no longer necessary to make the detour by the cliff.

While the doctor tried the various keys that he happened to have in his pocket, Helen brushed aside the vines and peered into the window. The large room was very orderly and empty and still and dark. Its familiar furniture, and the great fireplace with the deerskin lounge before it, gave her a strange sensation of looking in upon an old, abandoned self that she had quite overgrown. It was like the face of her extreme youth, recognizable yet somehow disappointingly strange. She hurried on into the little weedy garden where she had spent so many dreaming hours, and raising herself on her tiptoes looked through the window into her chamber. This was in disorder; the cover of the bough bed had been eaten by mice, revealing the dead brown branches beneath; and in one corner was a yellowish garment that had belonged to the waitress's child. She turned away, grieved. Her husband was still working at the rusty lock.

"I shall have to go down to my office to get the key," he said. "None of these will fit the lock. Will you wait?"

"No matter!" she replied quickly, recognizing in his tone an unwillingness to take this additional trouble, herself suddenly out of tune with her romantic project of returning to the old home for the day. "We'd better go on to the Eyrie at once and get our breakfast. I want a bath!"

So they turned into the path behind the house and proceeded silently homewards. Each was heavily conscious of their defeat, — the impossibility of reviving the glowing past, of returning to that little stone house with its shrivelled vines. She had thought of spending the day and perhaps the night there, playing once more the lover and his mistress, her heart quick with all the memories of what had been between them there within those gray walls ! But it might not be. The time had passed for such sentimental trifling for them. Life with its healthy, practical habit had captured them both. Yet she sighed.

As soon as they reached the Eyrie she ran to her room, luxuriated in her bath tub, put on a fresh gown, took a look at the two children, and came down to their late breakfast much refreshed. The dining room at the Eyrie had been enlarged by building out a glassed-in room overlooking the Lake. From it one could see the bold front of the new Sanguishine House across the blue waters of the Lake and also the lofty headland that separated the Eyrie from the Cove.

Holden was lounging before the fire, having had his coffee, smoking a cigar and reading his mail, which Gray Jack brought up to the Eyrie at this hour. The letter bag was heavy this morning as always, with letters from prospective patients, from doctors recommending cases, from old patients. Holden glanced over them and let them fall one by one to the floor. He was a wretched correspondent. Dr. Percy must always pick up the opened letters and see that they were duly answered.

This was the occasion, the wife thought, to broach her project, and she forthwith proposed her scheme.

"You must get away early this winter," she said in conclusion, "and join us somewhere — Italy or Germany. . . . It will be so good for the children."

As he said nothing, she insisted: —

"Don't you think so?"

"No, I don't think so."

"Eric!"

"But you have your heart set on going and that is enough — why make an excuse of the children?"

He rose with a frosty smile, scattering his letters, and took his watch out. Formerly he had made his first round of visits before breakfast, but these days he rarely got started by ten o'clock.

"Is that all?"

"If you don't want me to go, of course —"

"I haven't said so, have I?"

"I thought you would join us in a few months, and we could all have such a beautiful time!"

"Yes?"

"You will, won't you?"

"I don't know."

At this point they were interrupted by Dr. Percy, who usually came to the Eyrie shortly after breakfast to arrange the day's programme, discuss the cases, and collect the mail. Dr. Percy was the System of the establishment, the efficient fly wheel without which it would have doubtless flown into a thousand pieces. This morning he brought a message from one of the nurses.

"You must see that Miss Dupont," he said. "She's making a lot of trouble."

Holden shrugged his shoulders wearily. The women were always more troublesome than the men. . . . The day's routine had begun, the endless chain of annoying small vexations that make up the routine of the nervous specialist.

"I gave her a hypodermic this morning," Dr. Percy said.

Holden nodded. There was a time when the use of the little needle at the Healing Spring would have caused a revolution, especially if used by any one but Holden.

"I'll go over there first," he said at last.

As he slowly left the room, dragging his heavy body slightly, the younger doctor looked at him anxiously. He had the devotion of a boy to his chief, slaved for him, worshipped him, truly thought him a great man, — the most wonderful doctor he had ever known. He had done his own loyal part in the success of the establishment that had been built up, but he gave all the credit to the chief.

"What's the matter, Percy?" the young wife asked, sipping her coffee and glancing over a note. "Have some coffee?"

"Not to-day. . . . Do you think the doctor's quite himself?"

"The doctor? . . . Just tired. He's been up half the night — we had such a bad time!" and she recounted their journey.

"Perhaps that's it — but I think he needs a thorough rest, a change. No man can stand the sort of thing he does year in and year out."

"That's what I tell him, but you know he won't leave his old Spring. But I have a plan," she added brightly, and she developed at great length the trip to Europe. "You must

come up here and look after him while I am gone, won't you?"

"Yes, of course," he replied quickly. "But I wish you could take him with you."

"Oh, he'll come over when he gets tired," she said easily. "Just shoo the patients off, drown 'em — you can run the place, Percy!"

(Between them it was always "the place," and "the business.")

They chatted gayly, but when the young doctor rose to go, the cloud returned to his face.

"I wish he'd go now," he said again.

"You know well enough he won't, Percy, so what's the use of worrying?"

"Well, I'll do my best! When do you leave?"

"Two weeks from Monday."

"Passage engaged?"

Helen nodded. Her little plan had been carefully thought out, as always.

The young doctor waited, glancing over the mail, and finally went off, leaving the impression that there was something on his mind unsaid. It was difficult to tell a wife what he had in mind, — to hint that the doctor, his admired chief, was not always quite himself, that there might be a definite cause for his pallor, his moodiness, and his periods of lassitude, — a dangerous cause that doctors are always exposed to, as an ever ready temptation in their moments of fatigue and depression.

But the little doctor loyally kept his suspicions to himself.

PART FOUR



I

ONE hot August morning a rough wood boat rowed by two old men made in to the pier at the Cove and landed a passenger — a woman dressed wholly in black, who held a small bag in her hand.

“You’ll find him up there,” one of the men said, motioning to the nearest building.

The woman looked doubtfully at the bungalow gleaming in the sun, with a colored awning stretched over its broad veranda, then glanced back at the dazzling sand of the beach and the gleaming lake, as if doubtful whether she had been brought to the right place.

“Yes — up there!” the half-breed grunted, nodding his head encouragingly, and he and his fellow began to pull the boat away from the pier. The woman, thus left to her own initiative, dragged herself a little wearily over the hot sand towards the bungalow, examining it meanwhile doubtfully. She was thin and weak and seemed burdened with the small handbag that she carried. Sinking down on the lowest step of the long flight that mounted to the veranda she waited, and then as no one appeared she rose again and dragged herself slowly up the steps, clinging to the railing. As she reached the top a young man dressed in white flannels with an aster in his buttonhole came out of the door whistling and started to run down the steps. At sight of the stranger

he stopped and raising his white flannel cap asked her politely:—

“Are you looking for some one?” and as the woman did not reply immediately he added: — “Can I do anything for you?”

The woman looked at him closely out of her sunken eyes, then murmured:—

“I want to see the doctor.”

“Which one?” the young man demanded with a slight smile. “I am a doctor!”

“*The doctor*,” the woman repeated, stressing slightly the article, as if in her mind there could be but one, and as the other frowned impatiently she added, “the Healer!”

At the word the young man smiled broadly.

“You mean Dr. Holden? He isn’t here at present, — hasn’t come over to the Spring from his house this morning.”

“I will wait for him.”

The young doctor started impatiently to descend the steps, then turned.

“Dr. Holden rarely gets over before noon. Can’t I do anything for you? . . . He doesn’t usually see new patients — he is very busy, you know!”

The woman made no reply, but sank upon the veranda and brushed a hand across her eyes.

“Have you an appointment with him?”

The stranger shook her head.

“Then you had better let me talk to you. . . . Won’t you come into my office?”

This time she said slowly, positively,

"I will wait for *him*."

"At least take one of those chairs under the awning," the young man recommended impatiently, "and get out of this broiling sun!"

But the woman paid no heed, as if she had not heard his injunction, and closing her eyes rested her head against the railing. The young doctor shrugged his shoulders and hurried away. The woman sat there for some time, now and then opening her eyes and gazing listlessly out over the Lake. As people came and went along the trim paths, casting curious glances at the black figure, she rose and looked unsteadily over the little buildings and gardens where the nurses in starched white dresses passed back and forth on their errands. All was quiet, reposedful in the narrow glade, yet full of early morning activity. An old man with a shock of white hair moved about the grounds, gardening in a desultory way. On the porches of the bungalows and small cabins could be seen a few figures lying in wheeled chairs.

Everything glistened in the August sun.

Presently the woman descended the steps and walked slowly across the grove in the direction that the young doctor had motioned when he spoke of Dr. Holden's house. Her wandering gaze caught sight of the small stone house on the top of the cliff, and as if determining in her mind that this was where she would find the doctor she took the rough path that led thither and toiled up the steep side of the cliff, pausing every few steps to shade her eyes and look upward at the house. Thus slowly, painfully she dragged herself to the summit and sank down exhausted before the closed door of the little stone house. There she remained resting her head

against the door, closing her eyes to shut out the shimmering heat waves above the trees, unmindful of time.

She sat there,—a black spot huddled against the weathered door that was framed in green vines,—a face not young, not old, colorless, bloodless, with sunken eyes and curving mobile lips that were relaxed in a slight smile of anticipation. The bumblebees hummed in the overgrown garden beyond the house, and a dusky humming bird whirred about the blossoms of the drooping vine at the door. Its tiny presence, like the flicker of sunlight through the leaves, seemed to rouse the stranger from her reverie, and she looked more curiously at the spot,—the tangle of the old garden, the stone house covered completely with creepers, the cob-webbed small windows,—then yielding once more to the drowsy, deserted atmosphere of the place she closed her weary eyes and a smile of quiet content and peace began to wreath her thin lips. . . .

A man's slow step could be heard in the woods, and presently his broad shoulders brushed aside the bending stems of larkspur and hollyhock. At sight of the black figure, crouching against the door, he stopped abruptly. The woman opened her eyes and said simply:—

“You are the doctor !”

“What do you want?” Holden demanded harshly, “and why are you here? . . . No one is allowed —” he began and checked himself. His pale face flushed with irritation. The woman, examining steadily the heavy, bent figure of the man, noting the unhealthy pallor of the large face with its deep black eyes, said quietly:—

“I have come a long way to find you.”

"Did you write? . . . I don't remember," he replied uneasily, brushing his hand slowly across his forehead, as if he were making an effort to recall something that might have slipped his mind.

"No, I did not write! You would not have known me. . . . I came."

The doctor moved irresolutely, muttering:—

"We do not take patients who come unrecommended."

"But I have come a long way to find you," the woman repeated confidently.

"I said," Holden began, then in another key ended almost querulously, — "You should have sent me word at least!"

"Then you might have turned me away."

"Where are you staying — at the hotel?"

She shook her head, as if to say that hotels, even the humblest, were not for her.

"I walked from the railroad to the landing at the end of the Lake and from there some men brought me in a boat."

The doctor frowned and moved as if he would continue on his path and leave her there, but after making a step he turned and demanded:—

"What is the trouble?"

"I am sick — worn out," she said slowly, "and I must live!" She prolonged the last word with a sigh, as if her human tale of woe began and ended there.

"Yes, they all say that!" the doctor replied with slight scorn. "But what is your special trouble — and why must *you* get well?"

The woman quivered as if he had dealt her a blow. She rose trembling from the step and leaned against the door,

closing her eyes against the blinding sun, as if she would shut out his cold face.

“Perhaps I was wrong!” she murmured low.

“Come!” the doctor said more gently. “At least you must get out of the sun or you will have a stroke.”

He motioned her to follow him and led the way to the little garden at the end of the stone house. The firs growing thickly to the edge of the tiny beds completely screened the place and made a heavy shade. The woman sat down upon the stone bench, and the doctor, leaning against the flat boulder that had once served as a garden table, stood questioningly.

“I have other people beside myself to care for,” the woman began wearily. “That is the reason why I must live!”

“Married?”

She shook her head with a slight smile of self mockery.

“My mother, my sisters—I meant,” she explained.

And then she told her story, — the story of the woman’s struggle in the city, an old story with small variations in it. One of a large family with an invalid father and an incompetent mother, she had been forced to set her hand to labor before she was mature. In the shop, then the factory, where for ten long hours each day she had stood among the whirring belts, with the monotonous din of incessant toil, until her mind seemed to reel, she had spent six years. But she was intelligent enough to know that this drugging toil was veritable dissipation of her slight store of energy, and she had dragged herself out of the swamp of factory labor by incredible effort, educating herself nights and Sundays for employment that was less killing. First in petty businesses,

among coarse men, and finally in a quiet orderly office where intelligence was paid something like its proper wage she had forced her painful way, in order that she might earn money, and more money, for the helpless mother and the sisters, who should not be forced to repeat her struggle.

In the dark factory, in the hidden inner rooms of giant city buildings, she had spent all the days of her youth, with the grinding noise of labor in her ears.

"Never sunlight, never peace!" she whispered, looking at the dimpling lake beneath the little garden with a strange smile of attainment.

"I see," the doctor commented sententiously. "Years of overwork; poor, ill-cooked food; no rest, no sunlight, no play — the body gave out! What did you expect?"

"Yes," she acknowledged simply. "It gave out before its time."

"There are many like that!"

"Thousands and thousands of women."

"Well, — you went to see a doctor, I suppose, and he told you that you were killing yourself?"

"Yes — he told me to rest, and he gave me some medicine, a tonic. I could not rest — the medicine did me no good. I went to another doctor and he gave me another medicine. It did me good for a few days, and then I went to another doctor — I was very weak. He sent me to a hospital, and the doctors there made an operation. It did no good. I went back to my family; I wanted to die, but I could not — there was so much to be done! The time had not come," she said softly. "So when I was strong enough to stand up and walk, I came here."

“Why?”

“There was a woman in the bed next mine in the hospital who told me of your Healing Spring. She had been in the north here, and she said that you had saved her life — that was years ago. . . . She said, ‘He is the only doctor who can cure the sick — he is a Healer !’”

She glanced up at Holden with a look of triumphant assurance and her lips curved happily so that her face became younger, less faded and toil worn. The doctor moved impatiently.

“So on the word of this stranger in the hospital you have come a thousand miles to find a man you know nothing about ? That was not very sensible.”

The woman smiled again.

“How did you know I could do anything for you ?”

“Because I needed you so much !”

The doctor paced back and forth in thought.

“She told me the name of the Lake — Sanguishine. I looked it up on the map, — Sanguishine !” She rolled the name softly, lovingly.

“How did you know that I should be here ? It was some years ago, you said, that this woman was under my care.”

“I needed you so,” she repeated. . . . “The place is not what she said it was — different —” She broke off as though she were about to say that the Healer himself was not the one that had been described to her.

“How different ?”

“Oh, it’s more like other places in the country, they describe in books, with pretty houses and walks and flower beds, and people all about.”

"What did you expect?"

"I don't know — it would be large and silent and wild — it was in the wilderness, she said."

"That was long ago — there's no wilderness hereabouts now!"

"Ah, that is the reason. . . . But you are here still!"

"How do you know that I am the same — that I can do for you what I did for that woman?"

She looked at him with troubled eyes, and her glance fell as she murmured, "Ah, *that* I do not know!"

The doctor frowned and turned half away.

"My place is quite full just now — I have all the patients I can attend to, and more. . . . Besides," he continued brusquely, "it costs money to stay here — a great deal of money! Have you thought about that?"

"The woman said that you would take nothing for all you did for her."

He waved his hand as if to say that also was long ago.

"I would work and pay you afterwards, little by little," she said timidly.

"I don't know where to put you," he muttered to himself rather than to her.

"She said — that woman — that the sick lived in tents and log cabins, which they made for themselves when they were able to — they lay near the earth under the stars. . . . I could stay here in the shelter of the trees — anywhere!"

And as he waved this aside, she said pleadingly, "Take me! Let me come! . . . Don't turn me back. I *must* get well!"

He turned away impatiently, as if he had already spent too much time with her.

"This place is empty," she said, looking at the vine-covered window above her head. "Let me stay here!"

The doctor started.

"I cannot drag myself back in despair all those long miles — I'd rather —" She looked over the edge of the rock down into the blue water beneath, as if she would fling herself from the cliff and find rest beneath the smiling surface of the Lake.

"The house is empty," the doctor murmured more to himself than to her. "It has been long empty."

She said nothing, divining that in some way the place roused peculiar memories in the man.

"It is only by chance that you found me here this morning," he continued dully. "I do not often come this way."

"It is very lovely here," she said softly; "so far away from all the world."

"Come!" he commanded.

He strode rapidly to the weathered door of the little house and shoved it violently with one knee against the planking. It yielded slowly, the lock gave way, and at last the door swung in.

"I've lost the key long since," he explained.

She followed him into the large dim room of the stone cottage. The gray ashes on the hearth were covered with dust and soot. The place had a musty, shut-up odor, but all was in order, — the big table, the deep settle, the snow-shoes tied in bundles to the rafters. The doctor stood in the centre of the room and stared about him for some

moments, preoccupied with his own thoughts, unmindful of the stranger.

"Empty, empty!" he murmured to himself.

The woman softly crossed to the long window and raised a sash, admitting the warm, fragrant summer air into the still room.

"We will let life into it," she said softly, "and then it will become home."

The doctor started as if her random words had acutely touched his inner thought. She smiled back at him from the window, and as she stood there by the casement, parting the thick vines so that air and sunlight could enter, she seemed already a different creature from the forlorn, black-clothed woman that he had found crouching before the door an hour ago. She was taller than he thought, with a certain grace in her supple form, and the trembling smile upon her thin lips seemed to light her face with the look of youth she had so long lost. She was a woman whom some one might once have loved. The sad spirit of an unfulfilled womanhood lay in her wistful eyes.

"Yes!" the doctor exclaimed, opening the opposite window, "the house has been shut up too long — it should have been used before! . . . I see there is a leak beside the chimney — I will have it mended. . . . You'll do well enough here for the present. I will send some one to you."

Abruptly he stepped out before the woman could reply, and the stranger followed him to the open door where she stood upon the threshold as if mistress of the house, and watched him disappear along the path to the Spring. Then

she entered her new home and sat down on the broad settle with its worn deer hide, and stared into the cavernous, empty fireplace.

“Life,” she murmured, with still smiling lips. “It needs life — we all need life !”

And her eyes closed wearily.

II

THE new patient watched the nurse, who was dusting and putting to rights the small bedroom.

“Will the doctor see me to-day?”

“I don’t know, miss!”

“It’s a week to-day since I came — and he has been here only once,” she said in a low voice to herself.

“Don’t worry about that!” the nurse took her up sharply. “There are some who stay a month before they even get sight of the doctor — and some he never sees at all. . . . If you want anything, I’ll call Dr. Farrold.”

“She said he nursed the sick with his own hands — and his touch seemed to do them good,” the patient murmured to herself.

“Who? Dr. Holden? Not much!” the nurse exclaimed with a laugh. “I tell you he don’t seem to know half the time if a patient is here. He prescribes and leaves the details to the young doctors — they carry out the cure, you know.”

“How can they?”

The nurse smiled to herself, and as she was ready to leave asked again:—

“Shall I speak to Dr. Farrold?”

“No — I will wait until *he* comes!”

“That’s right. You’re doing well! Just don’t worry!

It takes time — months and months — when a patient is all run down like you were," the nurse said authoritatively.

"But I can't stay here months and months!"

"They all talk like that at first. But some of 'em stay here a year and more and then don't want to go away — they get used to it!"

The patient closed her eyes and turned away. Another time she asked: —

"You haven't given me the water."

"Oh, the Spring water — it wasn't prescribed for you."

"But I thought the water from the Healing Spring —"

The nurse laughed sceptically.

"You've heard that old story? It's just good plain sulphur water — and it's nasty enough I can tell you to do *some* good!"

"Won't you bring me some?"

"Oh, you'll go down to the baths some day. . . . Now you must take your medicine."

The patient took the glass from the nurse's hand and looked dubiously at the colored contents.

"I thought he never gave medicines, but you have brought me a new one every day and sometimes two or three!"

"Not give medicine — a doctor? They all give medicine, some more, some less — it just depends." She closed her lips against further indiscretion and urged, "Drink it — it will make you feel stronger."

The patient shook her head doubtfully, but drank off the dose and held out the empty glass.

"There!"

"That's right," said the nurse cheerily. "Now don't

you worry yourself about medicines or doctors or nothing. You'll get along fine — just wait and see. . . . Does that window make a draught?"

"Don't shut it! I like to lie and look out upon the green mountain across the gulf of blue sky. The mountain seems far away from here, as if it might be in the wilderness!"

The nurse screwed up her brows and glanced at Macatawa.

"It's a good ways off, sure! . . . It's wild enough here when winter comes, I can tell you!"

"But it's no longer the heart of the wilderness."

"I'm going now, miss. . . . Try to sleep all you can. It's nice and airy up here, and you can't be disturbed by anything. They haven't used this cabin since I was at the Spring. You're in great luck to have it."

"It *is* nice," the patient murmured. "Still as the wilderness, the heart of the wilderness!" she murmured as if she loved the words.

"Oh, bother the wilderness!" the nurse exclaimed laughingly. "Go to sleep." Then she closed the door, saying to herself, "That must be *her* trouble — the wilderness — it's on her brain. Poor thing! She looks quite worn out."

After the nurse had gone the patient did not sleep, but lay drowsily watching the fleecy clouds float over the gulf of blue outside her window. They made fantastic pictures of light and shade upon the swelling breast of hills and circled the summit of old Macatawa. Along the ridge where the fire had burned and been stayed, the stark trunks of dead trees stood gaunt against the horizon. They pointed their

bare heads to the sky in memory of the scourge that had reached them and stopped there.

The woman lay with a light and quiescent body. The medicines or the long silent days of rest seemed to have erased from her wasted body pain and fatigue. She had no strength, she could not move nor feel. But she was at rest. She was thinking of the woman who had once occupied this little stone house. There must have been a woman, who to her woman's eye had left the print of her hand upon her dwelling. This was a woman's room where she lay. Who was she? what had she been like? why was she here no more? And the doctor — the Healer she had dreamed of and sought with so much effort — what had happened to him? That glorious Healer she had come so many weary miles to find!

The door opened, and as if her thought had summoned him to her the doctor stood in the doorway, smiling slightly. She tried to rise, but fell back upon her pillow, murmuring, "At last!"

The doctor threw the cigar he had been smoking out of the open window and came up to the bedside. His heavy figure lurched slightly, as if he had not complete control of his muscles, and his eyes shone with a curious brilliance out of the pallid face. He breathed heavily, as if he were restraining himself under some sort of excitement.

The sick woman, watching him keenly, shrank away.

"How are you to-day, Miss — Miss!"

"Smith — Eva Smith," the woman said.

"Well, Miss Smith, you're getting on nicely up here by yourself, aren't you?" He spoke nervously, unlike the slow utterance that he had used the first time they had met.

"I suppose so. . . . I like to lie here and watch the clouds sail over the Lake and those great hills. . . . But I am very weak."

"That's all right," he said hastily, "you look comfortable!"

Thrusting his hands idly into his pockets he stared out of the open window at the sunny prospect of the hills. A distinct change came over his face, reflecting the swift course of thoughts in his mind.

"They used to be all covered with trees — primeval forest — clear to the top of the mountain," he muttered. "And all the valley between it and here was filled with the uncut forest."

"That was the wilderness!" she exclaimed softly.

"Yes, wilderness — all the way to the North Pole! Just the empty wild — free for animals and men."

"What happened to it?"

"Oh, first the lumber companies, and then tourists and settlers, and then the fires — the usual thing."

"Forest fires?"

"They burned to the divide you can see over yonder and stopped there by those big bare trunks on the ridge." And after a pause he muttered to himself, "It came near burning up the whole region — it might have been better if it had!"

"Why?"

"Oh," he said vaguely, "it would have made a clean sweep — all about the Lake. Then there would have been a new beginning, — perhaps."

"All that soft fresh green in the valley is lovely," she said.

“The new growth covers up the scars of the axe pretty rapidly,” he admitted. “But it will never again be the old north wilderness.”

“There will be green farms instead.”

“I suppose so — settlers are pouring in all the time.”

“And they make new homes for people to live in.”

“Out of the free wilderness.”

“Something better than the wilderness — homes for men and women and their children to live in. Homes for human lives!”

The doctor shrugged his shoulders with a scowl and turned his face squarely upon the woman. He looked at her frail body relaxed upon the bed and said meaningfully:—

“And that seems to you better — what they call life?”

“Yes,” she said, color flushing her white face, making the great affirmation in spite of her defeat in the struggle and her bodily weakness. “Yes, — human life, the chance to be, the chance of happiness.”

The smile faded from the doctor’s lips, and his face became sombre, harsh. He said brusquely:—

“The chance to be! Do you think that is so important after all? Has it brought you so much?”

“It has brought me little — almost nothing. But I can dream what it might be — in a place like this, in some new land of hope!” she murmured, flushing again over her wasted face as she confessed her woman’s defeat.

The doctor turned away impatiently and walked up and down the cell-like chamber, his eyes upon the ground. At last he stopped before the row of medicine bottles ranged on the little shelf beside the window and looked them over.

"You are taking the right things," he said, scowling at the labels. "Enough of 'em, too!"

"Medicines will not make me stronger," she observed quietly.

He wheeled upon his feet and exclaimed with a scowl:—

"You don't know anything about it! What do you come to a doctor for if not to get his medicines?"

"The others gave me medicine."

"Well," he said with an easy laugh. "*My* medicines are different, Miss Eva Smith! They will cure you!"

He turned to leave the room. But the sick woman drawing herself up to a sitting position with effort, leaned forward, and said in a low, intense tone:—

"That woman at the hospital said that you cured without drugs!"

The doctor stopped abruptly.

"Nonsense!"

"Yes," she insisted. "You were the Healer then!"

"In those days, you see, it was the wilderness here and very difficult to get supplies. We had few drugs of course, and did our best. We had to depend on ourselves pretty largely," he explained volubly, as if defending himself from an accusation.

"Yes!"

"For everything! We had few tools — why, I built this house myself with a crowbar and a hammer! . . . But now we have science to help us, — we can keep in touch with what is being done all over the world, — the latest things, you know!"

A smile of lurking irony played over his lips as he spoke.

"We try everything," he added.

"And it helps — science?"

"Of course it helps! Would you throw away the knowledge of two thousand years and all that men are doing to-day, and depend on one man?"

"If he were a Healer," she murmured softly.

The doctor frowned impatiently.

"So take your medicines with confidence — we still make cures, Miss Smith!" And then he added harshly, — "or make them think so! It's the same thing — we get results!"

"The medicines give — results?" she asked with unconscious irony.

"Oh, yes — plenty of results!" he laughed. . . . "Now take your medicines and leave the rest to me. Good-by, Miss Smith!" and the doctor was gone. The sick woman could hear the door of the little house close heavily behind him.

She lay for a long time quite still, looking out of the open window upon the beautiful landscape, but she no longer smiled. At last her lips moved unconsciously, and she murmured: "My Healer, oh, my Healer! Where has he gone?"

III

HE came again a few days later, just at nightfall. The sick woman was lying on the couch before the open window. The doctor came up to her without greeting and with a pre-occupied professional air took her thin arm in his long fingers and holding it lightly counted the feeble pulse beats. Then he knelt by her side and listened to the beats of her heart. As he rose from his knees he said dully:—

“No stronger, eh ?”

She shook her head.

“I must change your medicine !” He took a memorandum pad from his pocket, and began to make notes.

“That will do no good.”

He merely glanced at her and continued to write.

“Not any medicine, nor rest and quiet !”

He closed his book with a snap and exclaimed:—

“What do you want ?”

“First, tell me the truth — the whole truth.”

“About your case ? . . . It is not an uncommon one. Your organism is exhausted — nerve cells empty. The fibre and the flesh are burned out — you can see for yourself what the trouble is. You have spent all your energy with both hands. . . . Now you must take time — a long time — to get a new store of vitality.”

“Can I ever get it ?”

She looked at him searchingly, and he answered shiftily:—

“Nobody can tell you that! . . . Nature usually rights herself if you give her the chance — and haven’t tampered too far with her laws, — ” He mumbled rapidly the professional platitudes that meant nothing specific. “All you can do is to give your body a chance. Stay here and rest quietly, and see what Nature will do for you !”

She looked at him defiantly.

“That is very well for your rich patients down there,”— she pointed to the Cove below, — “but you know that I cannot lie here and rest — I have my work to do. I must live !”

An angry flush spread over his pallid face.

“You are unreasonable! You have spent all your capital, and now you want a miracle to renew it over night.”

“Yes,” she said insistently; “I want a miracle — my miracle !”

“Miracles don’t happen these days !”

He laughed disagreeably.

“That one said, — ”

“I cannot work miracles, — any longer,” he interrupted mockingly, “in spite of the tales you have heard about my Healing Spring. I am doing for you all that science can do to-day to get you well. You must be content with that and have patience.” More professional soothing syrup! “I am doing for you what I do for the others down there, and they are satisfied. They get well — sometimes.”

“I want more !” she said with a rare smile; “I want my miracle.”

“I cannot do the impossible !”

“You could once.”

He got up impatiently from the edge of the couch where he had been sitting.

“Don’t go !”

“Why should *you* expect the miracle ?”

“Because of my great need.”

“We all need our miracle — or think we do !”

There was an empty silence between them.

“You tell me I must accept this. There is no help for me except what Nature may hold out — no help in all the world !”

He shook his head.

“Tell me the truth — all the truth !”

“Very good ! You shall have it. There is nothing for you. You were doomed by God before you were born to this fate. I cannot patch you — no doctor could. Your little flame has been sucked out before its time by cruel labor in unhealthy conditions. There is no one who could give you back what you have spent the last dozen years !”

In the dusk his pallid face seemed to have something sinister in it. The woman looked at him in growing horror, speechless. She dragged herself upright by her hands, pushing back the hair that had fallen about her drawn face.

“I will not believe it !” she whispered.

“I tell you this because you demand the truth, — the whole truth as I know it. . . . The medicine I am giving you will quicken your machine for a little while, give you a semblance of health. If you had money, — enough money to free you from all hard work forever, — you might live on, drag out a life as a semi-invalid, like so many rich women.”

“Why this for me ?”

“Because, as I have told you over and over, you have starved yourself body and soul, woman — yes, body and soul, I say ! From the beginning you have squeezed all the force out of your body.”

“I had to,” she moaned.

“You have given it neither food nor joy — joy, that is what you need most ! You are starved, starved — and it is too late to get food.”

“I had to.”

In a gentler tone the doctor demanded:—

“Why didn’t you marry ?”

“Marry !”

“You might have ?”

“Yes,” she said simply. “I might have married — if I would leave others to starve !”

“It was a costly sacrifice for you,” he replied coldly.

“He was just a boy,” she said musingly, “like myself — working for a few dollars a week. We could not have done more than barely live with all our effort — and there were the others, my mother and sisters.”

“But afterwards, later —”

She bent her head.

“Was there no other chance ? Couldn’t you love another man ?” he probed pitilessly.

“Yes,” she said, raising her face and looking frankly at him, “I loved a man ! I might have had him !”

“Then why —”

“He was a married man — separated from his wife !”

“Oh !”

"It seemed to me then that I could not do that. It seemed to me wicked. I went away so that I might not do it. It was hard — it took all the will I had to leave him, — to leave my happiness. But I did it!"

"That was hard," he said dully.

"I am not sure that I did right," she went on in a clear voice. "If I were there again where I was, with his love and my happiness, I should do — differently."

He nodded comprehendingly.

"It would have given me life, — I should not be here at the end!"

"No."

"Yes, I should take it," she said quietly. "One must live and do one's work — that is the great thing in life."

"A woman like you must have love — and bear children," he said. "Or pay the forfeit, as you are paying. But it takes courage to defy the world — much courage for a woman."

"It takes courage, and I hadn't it, because I was not sure. But the time will come when single women like me who work as men work will have the courage to love and bear children if they need to — and men will respect them!"

"I hope so."

Like two who had come to know each other thoroughly, they were silent in the twilight. Outside the room a bird twittered in the garden, sang its little song, and then was silent, also.

"Well," the doctor muttered, "yours is a mistake that civilization has made as well as you. Now we must do the best we can with the mistake."

"Yes!"

"I wish that I could do more to help you, but I cannot."

"I will not believe that!" she cried in sudden revolt. "I will not believe that life has ended for me — that all happiness is closed against me, all doing. . . . Once," she leaned forward accusingly, "you would not have told me so — would not have come to me with drugs to hide the truth! You would not have thought it! Once you would have done the miracle for me!"

"When one is young, one believes many things — one tries many things," he said dully. "Perhaps I should have tried to work the miracle then — who knows? — and done it. . . . But I can no longer — that is all."

"Why was it? What killed the gift?"

He pointed to the valley that was covered with the dusk.

"A fire swept over the wilderness and left it charred — waste."

"Tell me what it was," she insisted, as one who had the right in her turn to the whole deep truth. "Tell me how you lost your gift of healing."

"Who knows! . . . Perhaps it never was, as I thought —"

"But others knew!" she cried.

"Self-deception — delusion."

"No! It was so!"

He began to pace to and fro over the rough-hewn planking of the little chamber. When he spoke, it was less to her than to himself.

"I thought I had the gift, as you call it, — something more than mere knowledge or skill, — something more than myself!"

"That is it," she cried yearningly, — "something outside yourself — the gift — the Healer's gift to be used for others."

"'Tis based on will — pure will!"

"Yes, will!" she cried. Her glittering eyes followed him about the little room.

"Will born in pain and effort, forged in the fire," he muttered; "the will to believe, the will to live, the will to do!"

"And all *that* you gave the sick!"

He nodded.

"Once I thought so."

"You did," she corrected.

"I gave them what I had struggled for and won myself."

She listened for the slightest word, and he spoke slowly, wearily, by fits and starts.

"Years ago when this was all a great wilderness I came here alone, sick in body and mind, — with disease eating at me. I lived over there in a cabin I built for myself — the house of evil it came to be. . . . One day chance took me out of it — I saw a light. . . . I have never been there since. But the evil has come back."

"You are afraid?"

"No!" he protested weakly.

"Yes," she insisted, "you are afraid!"

"I thought I had conquered the evil — possessed my will wholly. I began to work, to make cures. . . . It was a great delusion."

"No!"

"The great human delusion — I was merely in love with a woman," he said scornfully. "I lived on the wings of

the wind — I was to be more than man. . . . But I came soon to earth."

"And became less than man!" she whispered.

"Perhaps. . . . I have stayed on the earth ever since — it is hard and solid, the earth!"

He laughed again discordantly.

"Yet ever since you have been longing secretly to get back once more to the height, — on the wings of the wind?"

"Oh, no — don't poetize! . . . I remain on the earth and prosper. Sell my drugs and talk — delusions — to the good people who are eager to pay me a round sum for them."

"Ah, that is it!" the woman exclaimed with rising excitement. "You try to get the same results with the drugs — to mount on the wings of the wind with them. And you sell your gift!"

"Well, what do doctors do?"

"Never mind the other doctors. . . . I see how it is! You cannot make cures any longer by yourself, as you used to. So you give the sick drugs and more drugs — you tell them pretty lies, as you tried to tell me, to soothe them — and you trust the rest to Nature. I see!"

"Precisely!"

"You sold your gift — that was your first mistake. That was the beginning."

"Everything has its price in this world."

"Yes, almost everything," she said ponderingly. "Food and clothes and shelter, knowledge, too, perhaps, — things for the body and for the mind. But you cannot sell *yourself*, — that is different! You cannot sell your gift. It will die if you sell that!" she said positively.

"Well, I have made money — much money out of it —"

"Deceiving people who trusted you."

"I had to."

"That is a lie — the bottom lie," she said calmly.

He looked at her with amusement.

"I sold my labor," she continued, "for my mother and sisters, but I did not sell a gift like yours!"

"What do you think this place costs to run?" he asked with a laugh.

"Oh, thousands — millions — what difference does it make?"

"Well!"

"But you need not sell yourself — one never has to sell oneself. Never! That is where you were blind."

"If I hadn't —"

"You might have died, — well?"

"Large words," he pronounced disgustedly.

"Not just large words!" She stood erect, with burning eyes, and met him face to face. "I see it all now. I have been lying here all these days, wondering what was the curse that was blighting your Healing Spring, — the disease that was eating my Healer! . . . Now I know. You are killing yourself. You sold the gift God gave you — you alone, one out of millions — sold it for money, much or little, what matters it? And you tried to make it come back with drugs, with lies, with little rules and baths and strokings of the body — all tricks, tricks, — the tricks of the trade."

"Isn't that what most doctors do every day — tricks?"

"For them it is well enough — they never had a gift. They patch, let them patch! . . . But you, — oh, my Healer!"

The doctor leaned heavily against the stone wall and kept a moody silence. The woman watched him.

"In those other days," she asked gently, "you lived here?"

"Yes. I made this cabin — with my own hands. I laid stone upon stone to build it." He tapped the rough stone idly with his hand. "In those days I was a worker — I had faith!"

"And you were the Healer!"

"I built this little cabin of will, — pure will, — each rock set plumb with its mate. I dragged them into place with all the strength of my body. I built it all, slowly. And as I built it I stripped away from me lust, and the craving for drink and drug. I became a man, laying these stones one upon another, here in the solitude of the wilderness, in the icy winter with the snow and the wind beating upon me."

He spoke in a low voice and stretched his arms apart and swept the wall with his touch, as if he would once more feel as he had felt then, filled with fiery will, the vision before his eyes.

"I know each stone in these walls — my back was bent with the weight of it. . . . And out of them I built myself."

"The Healer!" she whispered, as if something in his appearance, in the low chanting tone of his voice, had revived in him the man that was once there.

"As I strove to build, the chains of lust and weak desires fell away — forever, I thought. . . . But they have wound themselves again about my feet." . . .

"You built it as a home for some one?"

"A temple for my soul, as the preachers say, and the poets," he corrected harshly. "Only I confounded my soul with

her — a woman ! . . . No matter, it escaped somehow. And this house became empty, deserted, as you found it when you came."

He stepped to the door, the tale having been told wholly.

"And now?" she demanded, passing in front of him.

"Now?" he asked vacantly.

"Yes! Now that the whole truth lies before you?"

He laughed harshly.

"Now that you know what has become of your Healer? . . . You can stay or go as you like. You know the inside of this doctor's bag of tricks as few patients do — you can judge for yourself what is best for you. Perhaps you will want to go on and seek elsewhere for your Healer!"

He stopped to laugh ironically.

"When you find him, keep fast hold of him. I mean keep your faith in him — if you can!"

"I was not asking for myself," she said.

He shrugged his shoulders, and passing around her made for the door.

"I shall not leave," she whispered. "I shall wait here — for my Healer to come again —"

"As you like!"

"I shall wait for him to bring me my miracle!"

They stood close together in the complete darkness that had fallen. She could hear his heavy breathing.

"That cannot happen," he said dully, "any more than the wilderness can come again about the mountain."

"Something better than the wilderness may come to the mountain and the valley. I have faith in my miracle!"

She was alone in the dark.

IV

To the pretty German baths, which Mrs. Goodnow's last medical adviser had recommended for her rheumatic gout, word came occasionally of the doings at that other healing spring far away in the new world. The doctor's wife had prolonged her stay abroad into the summer, although her husband had not yet joined her, because of her mother's rheumatic gout and other family complications that seemed to her to demand her presence. The two little girls were "getting the languages," besides all those more intangible benefits that Americans are supposed to acquire by foreign residence. There were many other members of divided households at the baths and elsewhere on the continent. Vera Travers having dispatched her Gerald to his banking had established herself comfortably with Nina Farrington in a villa neighboring Mrs. Goodnow's. Elport had taken them all on a motor trip through the Rhine country, and American friends happened upon them almost daily, so that they were in no danger of feeling lonely.

Helen had urged her husband to leave his work for a few weeks and refresh himself in this agreeable life, but his replies had been vague and unsatisfactory. From her old friend, Dr. Percy, she got most of the real information about her home that she had. He wrote regularly and fully. His earlier letters had contained cheerful announcements. The doctor had recovered something of his old

energy after a short vacation in the woods and was in good shape for the summer season, which was always the most trying period at the Spring. And the summer had opened auspiciously. "It promises to be our most successful season," Dr. Percy wrote in early June. "The region has wholly recovered from the fires, the camps are filling up for the summer, and new ones are building. We shall be very gay — except for the large hole you leave unfilled!" There followed a list of notable names of summer visitors to the Lake. The names meant more to the doctor's wife than they had in earlier years, because in her visits to the city and in her travels with her mother, she had acquired a large store of that small family chronicle which any woman with social aspirations easily absorbs. The Thornton Howards, the Payson Blakes, — these were real acquisitions to the Sanguishine colony! And the doctor's camp had an interesting list of patients, — "Williams, the famous operator in wheat, has come, and Mrs. Howard Gardiner — the one who was once Mrs. Gardiner Howard, you remember — has the Locust Cottage with her companion, a maid, and two nurses — a sad case," etc. "A few locomotors, of course" Dr. Percy concluded; "we shall not have a room to spare."

Dear Percy! the wife thought, as she finished his letter — so loyal and devoted, and so tactful. If it had not been for his good sense and his soothing methods of handling difficult patients, there would have been many a storm, especially in the doctor's irritable condition. Yes, Dr. Percy was the mainspring of the prosperous establishment, and thoroughly earned his handsome salary. She could rest content away from the Lake so long as he was there to help her husband.

But the next letter and the next were less satisfactory—disturbing, in fact. There had been some sort of disaster at the Healing Spring. A nurse had been discharged, with charges and countercharges,—gossip of course among the patients and also among the summer people at the Lake. “The nurse has given out that she was ordered by the doctor to increase the dose — you probably saw her story in the newspapers — it was of course greatly exaggerated. There was no real danger, and Mrs. Gardiner came around in a few hours. She was well enough to leave the next morning. . . . But it was all very unpleasant. The doctor is so far from well that I have not liked to discuss the matter with him. I think he should take a vacation.” Evidently Dr. Percy felt the strain of the establishment, and yet would prefer to have the doctor away — strange situation ! “When do you sail ?” he asked in the next. “I’m urging the doctor to go into the woods for a week. *He is in very bad shape.*” This last was twice underlined. It seemed to hint of facts that the young doctor hesitated to write the wife. Yet she lingered on at Langen Schwalbach, not willing to believe that affairs were as bad as her imagination would paint them, not sure that her presence could do much to mend them, — not sure of her influence with her erratic husband.

“Old Gray Jack has been off on another spree,” Dr. Percy wrote. “He has been talking to some of the patients very indiscreetly and is a general nuisance about the place. He should be sent away, but the doctor won’t hear of it. Something will have to be done with him.” Old Gray Jack drinking again,—“on sprees,” — the thing was incredible ! Helen recalled the man’s story with a queer foreboding of misfortune.

She mentioned the fact to Vera, who said with a laugh, "Those men are never really cured, you know. It always breaks out some time, so Gerald says."

That was hardly comforting. She took Dr. Percy's last letter to the villa garden to read it over. It was of unusual length.

"I wrote you before, I think," he said after some slight preliminary gossip, "that the doctor has not picked up after his last trip to the woods as we had hoped, — is rather worse. Hughes and I do all we can, of course; I have made most of the visits outside, but the patients grumble; they will have the doctor every day, you know. They are beginning to talk — think there's something wrong. If he had only joined you! But he won't leave the place now — stays by himself most of the time at the Eyrie, and that is very bad for him — he should not be alone." Of the dire fact, which Dr. Percy hinted at, the wife had yet no suspicion, and the little doctor could not bring himself to be more explicit, on paper at least. "He takes Gray Jack's lapse from virtue too much to heart, and yet he will do nothing with the old scoundrel. . . . Williams left yesterday — the grain man — much dissatisfied, it seems. A rather vulgar person from Minneapolis, you know, but one it was just as well to please. There have been two or three other defections lately — we are not as full as we were. But I can hardly get the doctor to look at a new case. . . .

"Did I tell you, by the way, of a mysterious patient who arrived about a month ago, unannounced — a Miss Eva Smith? I found her one day sitting outside the office, a poor, forlorn little woman in black, sitting there in the sun

like a stray cat! She had just drifted ashore, God knows from where. Had heard of the doctor somehow and found her way up here. We were crowded then — had turned away a number and had a long waiting list. But she would see the doctor and somehow managed to, and he must have taken an interest in her. For she has been here ever since and latterly, I believe, has begun to get well. I thought we could do nothing for her, and so did the nurse, she was in such bad condition when she arrived. A working woman, I believe, all run down. Nobody seems to know anything about her. But the doctor has shown more of his old interest in her case than I have seen for a long time — visits her every day whether he comes to the Spring or not. She is in the little house on the cliff that has been shut up for so long." . . .

Helen dropped the letter into her lap at this sentence, and it was some time before she resumed her reading.

"Just lately the doctor has taken another tack. He has begun to fire patients right and left! Yesterday he sent away two. Mrs. Phillips was one — you remember her? Mrs. Boyden Phillips from Washington — she was with us all last summer, and you liked her, I believe. The doctor told her that she wasn't worth working on — it was time and trouble thrown away to cure her — she didn't really want to get well, etc. The poor lady came to me with tears in her eyes. I tried to calm her down, but she said, 'I was never so insulted in all my life. He talked to me as if I were a bad child. Of course he can't be himself.' I am afraid he is not, though yesterday seemed like old times. Do you remember when he packed off that broker chap, told him he wouldn't take his gambler's money? . . . Mrs.

Phillips's going has created a sensation in camp, — she was such a friend of the place, — a real advertiser ! She knows a lot of important people. . . .

“After Mrs. Phillips, he ‘went down the line’ as the boys say, and the patients all looked like whipped children when it was over. He told them some awful home truths. First it was the ‘locomotors’ (poor devils, they couldn’t run away !) and then it was the hysterics, and last the plain prostrates — he means to get them all out on the stone pile ! Well, I suppose the shaking up may do some good — but we can’t stand many such whirlwinds or we shall be without patients. He stopped off the medicines. . . . In a word, dear Mrs. Holden, one heart will be gladdened when a certain lady once more shows her smiling face in these parts and —”

At this point Helen rose from the garden seat, folded the letter, and went into the villa to send a telegram engaging cabin reservations on the next steamer. She said to her mother when that poor lady protested at being left alone, “I’ll send Nora back for you — I am needed at the Lake.”

“Is it that mad husband of yours who is making trouble ?” the old woman asked peevishly.

“Things are not going right at the Spring. I had a long letter from Dr. Percy, which disturbs me — I must get back there as soon as I can.”

“Things will never go right with *him*,” the old woman rasped. “I always told you that !”

“Will you return with me or shall I cable Nora ?”

“It’s so comfortable here,” the old woman whimpered, “and you took the villa for the season at such a price !”

“Very well, I’ll cable Nora.”

“Why didn’t you divorce him when you found out what he was like?”

Mrs. Goodnow’s Puritanic views of divorce, it would seem, had undergone a remarkable transformation since she had been moving about the world and meeting quite respectable ladies who had either exchanged husbands or dropped husbands at will.

“You forget, mother, whose money we are living on since the Colonel and Nora’s husband made away with Dad’s,” her daughter replied curtly.

“We have been very unfortunate since your father died. . . . It might have been some other man’s money, however, — not that crazy —”

But her daughter had gone to order the maid to pack her trunks. Her thoughts were less filled with the picture of disorder and financial disaster at the Healing Spring, revealed by Dr. Percy’s letter, than with that mysterious new patient — a certain “Miss Eva Smith.”

V

IN the little garden upon the overhanging rock Eva Smith was moving about slowly, cutting the thick summer growth with a pair of shears. Where she passed through the tangle of the neglected garden she left behind her in the open path faded weeds and dead stalks. At times she paused in her task of pruning and looked out over the Lake to the blue hills and the broad valley before old Macatawa, which rose into a cloudless September sky. A little smile of hope and content came over her thin lips as she gazed upon the mountain. When she bent to her task her black dress still fell away from her slender body, but she moved with the spontaneity of health and worked steadily until the doctor's step upon the path arrested her. She stood in the midst of the dead growth and waited for him to come to her.

He walked with the alert step of a busy man,—of one who had already taken in the time of confusion a determined course. His face, though pale, no longer had the unhealthy pallor of recent months. He smiled as he saw the woman, and when he spoke his tone was less that of doctor to patient than of friend to friend.

“Out so early and at work!” he exclaimed.

“Yes! The morning tempted me out. I must work! And this garden has been left too long neglected.”

“Nothing has been done with it for five years—five

years," he repeated, a momentary shade passing over his face.

"All that time! It has gone back to the wild."

"Yes—to the wild. . . . But this bending over in the sun will tax your strength."

"I have more strength than you suspect," she replied quickly.

"I know that! . . . Who would have thought a month ago when I found you over there huddled against the door that you would be working to-day like a strong woman!"

"The miracle came," she said in a low voice, with a smile.

"You may well call it a miracle! . . . But I had no part in it."

"Who knows?" she said slowly.

"I have been the patient — your patient," he admitted abruptly.

She smiled, while he selected a large thistle from the heap of dead stuff and hurled it over the cliff.

"Yes," she murmured, watching the flight downwards of the whirling thistle. "I am well! I shall not have to drag myself wearily through the world after all, a burden to myself and to others. The weight has somehow slipped from my shoulders — almost."

"Good!"

"That was what I expected when I came."

"And your faith has been answered," he said heavily.

"Yes! . . . Soon I must go back to my work."

"Don't think of it yet," he said hastily. "After what you have been through with, it takes a long time to reëstablish permanent health."

“Not always!”

“Why must you hurry?”

“Because my work is waiting for me — as yours is for you,” she added softly.

They stood beside the edge, silently gazing at the water beneath into which the thistle had fallen and was floating aimlessly on the little waves. There was movement on the shore across the Cove. The trim little launch of the camp was at the wharf waiting for passengers. Presently a woman got into the boat followed by two nurses with numerous bags and bundles. A sardonic smile crept over the doctor’s face as he watched the embarkation and the boat starting out across the Lake in the direction of the Settlement.

“There goes another patient,— the third this week,— and two of the nurses with her. They get spoiled here, waiting on rich people—I shall have to go back to the nuns, who are immune to worldliness. That is, if I have any nursing to be done. At this rate there will be no one left at the Spring.”

“You will not send away all the sick?”

“All but those I can really help.”

“You could not help her or the others that have gone?”

“No!” he said shortly. “Derelicts all,— spoiled. They had no sound fibre left in them to work upon.”

With a gentle smile the woman murmured softly:—

“Perhaps they will find their healer.”

“It must be the God who made them, then!”

“Yes, the God who made them — in one form or another.”

He walked restlessly back and forth in the cluttered garden, his brow furrowed with thought. At last he exclaimed to himself rather than to her:—

‘But when they are all gone, where shall I find others, more fit material for my hand?’

“They will come to you.”

“Oh, the rich and the idle and the weak and the vicious — they will come ! They have found the path to the Healing Spring already. We are famous for patching derelicts — that is our reputation !” He laughed harshly. “But men and women who are in earnest about living, who have wills to be roused, who can be awakened to life. . . . No, they don’t come here any longer, — since the wilderness has gone and this has taken its place.” He pointed to the roof of a new camp on a neighboring island.

“Then you must look elsewhere — out in the world !” the woman suggested, with sudden daring.

“In the world — go to the city ?” the doctor questioned. “Never ! I said they should come to me. I will stay here and wait for them, if I wait alone.”

“No, you must go into the world, — into the big, big world filled with men and women, laboring and suffering, real men and women, who need you, — who are waiting for their healer,” she said firmly.

“I left the city because one could not do real work there — merely patch and sell drugs — and pocket the pelf.”

“You came into the wilderness first to find yourself, to heal yourself, and make ready for your work.”

“Yes — that was it.”

“Now your wilderness has left you !”

“I, too, am a derelict on its shores !”

He pointed meaningly to the row of blasted trees along the mountain ridge.

"But this wilderness is only for youth," she said, coming nearer him, "where they can wander and learn to find their way. . . . For men there is the other wilderness,—the world of men and women where they must work!"

The doctor looked away dully.

"That is no longer for me," he muttered. "I must stay on here in my corner about my old Spring forever, remembering what it might have been. There is nothing else for me."

It was the faint cry of the broken idealist, who perceives his defeat and has the strength merely to nurse the fragments of his dream. The woman looked at him pityingly, then resumed her gardening, and for some minutes nothing could be heard in that quiet spot but the snip of her scissors cutting away tangled growths. At last the doctor turned on his heel, and in a tone of commonplace advice remarked:—

"Don't tire yourself working in this old garden. . . . And don't think of leaving us yet! Stay and see the Spring under the new conditions — with most of the patients gone. No one needs this little house — it has been unused¹ too long."

She made no sign. He walked a few steps slowly, then turned back and came close to her.

"Don't go — don't leave me *now!*" he cried. "I need you. Don't you know that?"

She looked serenely into his troubled face.

"No, you need no woman."

"I built this cabin for a woman," he said slowly. "It was to be a shrine for love. . . . I was drunk with love then," he ended harshly.

"And love failed you," she observed tranquilly.

"Yes."

"Are you a weakling that needs a woman's arms?" she demanded with quiet scorn. "Because love failed you, will you fail?"

He was silent before her accusing eyes. Because his love dream had proved mere vapor of passion, his soul had grown weary and come near death.

"My Healer," she murmured gently, "must be strong to live without love if need be. He must not cling to the fire-side — like a woman."

"One cannot live always without joy," he muttered heavily. "You must know that. It kills! It is death in life — worse than death itself."

A look of pain crossed the woman's pale face, as if he had recalled to her the memory of bitter years. She turned away.

"That is woman's hunger — happiness."

"Man's, too!"

She met his glance bravely.

"Then if joy be necessary to you — if to live you must eat — take your joy!"

"You mean that?"

"Yes!" she cried bravely. "Take your joy — eat! . . . But do not let it make you soft. . . . Take what you must for your man's work. But *do* the work — fulfil your soul and live."

With upturned head she looked fearlessly into his eyes, as one who had suffered and achieved courage.

"Take my joy?" He repeated her words wonderingly. "Feel life again, you say. Do you understand?"

"Yes!" she whispered. "I understand! . . . But, re-

member, for all the joy that you take, my Healer, you must give back life to others, — life, more life, always life."

And slowly, as if she would reveal to the full all the meaning that pain had taught her, she continued :—

"No woman shall swerve you from your path if you will be a healer — the real healer of men. . . . We women are but chance vessels for a man's will — or devils to destroy him when he proves to be less than man."

For a long time neither spoke, and then suddenly she asked :—

"Where is that cabin you lived in first, long ago?"

"You mean the trapper's hut in the valley of the Seven Lakes?"

He pointed vaguely towards the east.

"You called it 'the house of evil.' Because you struggled there with your devils?"

He nodded.

"You left it?"

"I built this house for refuge!"

"You thought to escape the devils by love! So you ran away from them. . . . You should have stayed there in your house of evil until there was peace in you, or death. . . . But you ran away. That is what weak men do when they can — run away."

"I thought the devils were dead!"

"No! You never dared go back to see?"

"Never! . . . It is a gloomy hole — a little, narrow valley like a dark pocket between two steep hills."

The woman meditated for a time, then exclaimed :—

"You must take me there!"

"Take you there?" he repeated, startled. "What for? It is a long way by canoe and trail — a good day's journey from here."

"You must take me there!"

"Why that of all things?"

She smiled mysteriously.

"Are you still afraid to go back?"

"Afraid!" he muttered uneasily.

"Afraid of yourself?"

"It is an ugly place, with unhappy memories," he replied evasively.

"I must see your house of evil — you will take me there!" she insisted.

"What is the use of going back?" he demurred. "I have never been near it since!"

"But the devils followed you over the hills."

"Yes — they came here."

"So you must go back and meet them there!" she cried. "Can't you see? You ran from them to get joy — happiness. You built this shrine to hold a woman and her love!" Her voice trembled with a light touch of scorn. "You built it here upon a high rock in the full sunlight. But your devils followed you into your shrine, and made themselves at home. They are eating you now!"

"Yes," he groaned; "pride and lust and weakness of will."

"Weakness of will — the worst of all!"

After another long pause she said softly: —

"So we will go back there together, you and I, and meet them every one."

The man looked gropingly into the woman's confident eyes.

"Then what?"

"Then you will know peace once more and joy — yes, joy! without which there can be no true health nor can you give health to others. . . . Joy is the spring of life. . . . But not the joy you have known."

"What joy?"

"The joy of perfect will," she murmured.

And as he debated her words with himself, she continued, looking closely into his face with a wistful tenderness: —

"That is the joy of joys, my Healer!"

"And you would do this for me?" he demanded, his hands gripping her arms and drawing her to him.

A look of yearning — the defeated mother-look of woman-kind — came into her eyes.

"I would do all for you!" she whispered.

"Afterwards?"

She shook her head slowly.

"What matters that to me? There will be no afterwards for me — there can be none."

As he still waited, testing the metal of her nature with his searching glance, she drew him to her, and said: —

"Can't you understand, my Healer? . . . I said that if life ever came to me again, I should not refuse it, like a coward. It has come to me, terribly, with a blinding light in its eyes. . . . I see that I have endured pain always for this chance to live now — for another. That is woman's supreme joy." . . .

"But afterwards when you have made me whole and I go my way — alone?"

She made a weary gesture of indifference.

“I shall have lived — what more can there be for me ? . . .
But you will come out of your house of evil a man once more.
You will become again the Healer — my Healer, whom I
saw in my dreams so far off and came all this long way to
find. . . . You will give me my joy ?”

Her face broke into a radiant smile of hope, as of one that
stood upon the peak of life and looked upwards.

“That old story again !” he exclaimed with a smile. “Can
you still believe in me now that you know all — see me as I
am ?”

“I believe more than ever !”

“Remember, it is but a dismal hole, especially at nightfall
when the sun goes down behind the hills, and the shadows
begin to creep about you.”

“I am not afraid.”

“Then come — now !”

VI

WHEN the steamer docked, Helen despatched a telegram to Dr. Percy to meet the North Star Express the next morning. Then sending the children to her mother's house with their governess, she sped northward, with a clear determination to set her house in order. She had decided to return alone in order to leave herself free to act decisively. For six days she had pondered her problem and the possible paths she might take for a solution. There was divorce, which was often suggested by her mother. Her husband had become impossibly trying — she had a woman's grievance in his coldness to her — and now that he was ruining himself and his children's future, not to mention her own happiness, by his eccentric conduct, she would have ample justification before the world should she leave him and take her little girls with her. But she was farther from divorce when she landed at the dock than she had ever been in her life.

In the first place she was not one to confess defeat thus easily: she preferred to live on in a shell of marriage with a man who had ceased to love her, whom she had found more than trying, rather than let the world know her mistake. Many women, she said to herself, did that,—probably most. And then there was the question of support. As she had reminded her mother, now that Colonel Blake had frittered

away their fortune in foolish investments, and Nora's young husband had turned out badly, it was becoming a serious question how the whole family was to live, — how she was to accomplish that orderly and smiling future that she always designed for her two little girls. They must have their chance. And by that she meant much, — like any good mother, — more than she had ever had for herself. So the first thing she must do, clearly, was to reëstablish the Healing Spring, with Dr. Percy's help, on its former prosperous basis, or take the doctor somewhere else and build up a new business, as she had long ago wanted to do.

But such material preoccupations were by no means uppermost in her mind those six days on the steamer and in her berth in the sleeping car on the way north. Amid all the plans and considerations that beset her busy mind there was one dark centre around which her thought revolved — and that was the mysterious woman, so casually mentioned in Dr. Percy's last letter, — that woman charity patient, Miss Eva Smith !

The wife's pretty lips curved scornfully at the common name ; she pictured a flaming, hysterical, forlorn woman — the sort that twine themselves about a susceptible doctor, such as she had often seen at the Spring. Never before had she been disturbed by this woman thing. Her husband, whatever his other faults were, had never become involved with a woman, and she had excused much in his harshness and indifference to her because of that confidence in him. But now — yet why should the casual mention of this chance patient so arouse her woman's antagonism ? Something supersensible seemed to tell her that here she must fight the

great battle of her marriage — against a woman named Eva Smith.

Lying in her private compartment, in a pretty dressing gown, her loose brown hair waving over her white neck, she had but to look into the little mirror between the windows to assure herself of her full woman's power. As her mother plaintively said, she was better looking than she had ever been, — fresh and strong, full of bloom. Vera's admiring comment as she bade her friend good-by on the other side rang in her ears, — "Whose conquest are you planning, Nell?"

"My husband's!" she had laughed back, playing with the truth.

"The Wild One! I should say you had pretty well leashed *him* by this time — doesn't he pull hard at the family trace?" Vera had retorted with a touch of compassion for the hard-working doctor.

"Oh, one can never tell," the wife said evasively, with the easy cynicism of the day, "about any man. It is well to be prepared!"

Looking at her pretty face and graceful figure, stretching her jewelled hands and examining their rosy nails, she felt confident in the result of the coming battle for her woman's rights. Other men found her attractive, — even old Elport, who had hung about Schwalbach at her command all summer until business had called him home. She was at the very apex of woman's power, not so much the fearful mother as she had been these latter years; more seductive to a passionate man, who had once yielded to her. Her lips closed firmly in a confident smile.

Men were apt to fall into the mire of vulgar intrigue, so her mother said, — especially brilliant doctors, who are more exposed than other men, as Nina Farrington had informed her, possibly from personal experience. Yet she would not have expected it of Eric — her Wild One. He might kill her in a gloomy rage; he might leave her in one of his dark moods and disappear, never to be heard of again. Some crazy act like that he was capable of. But not mere common infidelity!

Her finger touched the long scar above her temple, from which the brown hair fell away, and her smile faded. That was where the knife in his hand had entered. He had snatched her from a living death or death itself with his skill and his courage — with his will. After that there should have come nothing in all the world to divide them. And yet they had been divided — were divided. Not so much in space or time as in spirit, they had been divided ever since the first winter. Her fault? Had she been fully grateful for the gift of her life? She had given gift for gift, — given herself, — woman's utmost gift. Thus she defended herself.

Suddenly the conviction came over her that it was too late; her mad haste to reach the Lake was useless. She had lost! She sat upright, clenching her hands until the sharpened nails bit into the soft flesh. She had lost him from the beginning — never really had had him all these years since. Now that she saw the truth, it stunned her like a blow. . . . But he was her husband by marriage, the father of her children, and she would not let him go — never! If all that was left her was her technical position of wife and mother,

she would fight for that — until the end. Thereafter on the long journey she stared moodily at the winding landscape of field and woods, while the train rushed through the wilder valleys of the northern hills. . . . No, never ! Her woman's grasp was firm, to hold the shadow of her life, against this other woman, — all else. . . .

In this mood, with weary, set face, she descended from the train, almost falling into the arms of little Dr. Percy, who was there to receive her, bowing and smiling, in his old rôle.

“Heavens, but I'm that glad to see you, princess, I could hug you !” he cried. But beneath his voluble greeting she could detect a weight of anxiety, a nervousness, as if she had come inopportunely after all. Under the shower of his effusive speeches she braced herself for the worst.

When they were flying over the dark water toward the Eyrie in the doctor's little launch, he began again : —

“It makes a bad world seem good to see you sitting there, Highness ! . . . Had a bully time ? . . . Buy lots of clothes ?”

“Never mind the frills, Percy,” she answered. “Tell me — everything !”

“Well,” he stammered. “There isn't so much to *tell*. You'll *see* fast enough for yourself !”

Then he dove down the hatch to fuss with his engine, and she waited impatiently for him to reappear.

“Where is the doctor ? Did you tell him of my coming ?”

“He had gone when your telegram arrived.”

“Gone — where ?”

“I don't know — up the Lake somewhere in a canoe.”

He dove again into the hatch to fuss with the engine, as if

he hoped in this way to escape from her question, but when he reappeared it came relentlessly.

“Did he go alone?”

“No — there was some one with him.”

“Whom?”

“One of the patients —”

“That woman?”

“Miss Smith — did I write you about her?”

“When did they go?”

“Sometime yesterday in the morning — he wasn’t around at luncheon.”

“And they haven’t come back?”

“Not when I left the Spring.”

Then as if in reply to her tightening lips he exclaimed hastily: —

“Don’t think — that . . . I’m sure —”

“Think what, Percy?” she asked coldly. “How has the doctor’s health been?”

“He seems better the last week or two, much more like himself, and he’s been working hard. But there aren’t many patients to work with!” He laughed ruefully. “He’s cleaned the place out pretty nearly. We might as well shut it up and save expense.”

“He turned them away?”

“The ones that didn’t go of their own accord — all but four or five. . . . I wrote you how he began — thank God you’ve come home to save the pieces!”

“Perhaps I can’t do anything, Percy,” she remarked wearily. “The doctor was always very obstinate about his work, you know. . . . How did it begin?”

"He's been under a strain — a long strain," the young man suggested with ready excuse. "No man could stand what he has done for the past three years. In that time he's built up a business of more than fifty thousand dollars a year — think of it! And it really all depended on him — we didn't count except to do his bidding. That's enough to tell the story, isn't it? Not a single day of real vacation in all that time, — no wonder the man began to go to pieces."

"The doctor never cared for vacations like other men," she said.

"Well, now he must take one! . . . He has done more than three men, — all the diagnosis and prescribing and this psychotherapy business, — everything. Until this summer he wouldn't let us take any of it off his shoulders."

So while the little boat chugged across the Lake Dr. Percy opened more and more his simple heart to his old mistress, revealing his perplexities, his sorrow for his admired master, and an altogether comic woe over the loss of "so much good business." "The best patients are the ones he's offended most, telling them the truth about themselves. What good does the truth do anybody? What they want is to be cured, and they'll pay their money for that!"

As the boat docked he ended hopefully: —

"It'll be all right now that you're back, princess! We'll straighten out by next summer."

"I don't feel so sure of that, Percy," she said heavily. "Perhaps he's gone back to the wilderness!" She laughed with an attempt at gayety.

"It'll do him good," the little doctor remarked hastily.

"I have thought we might close up the camp and go to the city — I don't know."

"The place was doing so splendidly, — it would be a pity to throw it all away. And it would take time — years — to get started right elsewhere."

"Well, I'll see what can be done."

She waited while he made fast the boat, and then they mounted the steep steps to the house.

"And all this began the time you wrote me — with the coming of the new patient?" she demanded.

"Before that — he was running down fast, neglected his work. And — and — taking something, I think," he brought out desperately at last. "Wasn't always just fit, you know."

"Oh!"

For the first time she comprehended the full import of the letters. The old habit that had almost been forgotten, so deeply buried in the past it had seemed to be, had risen from the depths and taken fresh hold upon the man.

"He's been better lately," Dr. Percy hastened to add. "I don't think he's taken anything since — since — All he needs, I'm sure, is a complete rest, change."

The wife looked thoughtfully at the waveless black water, then at the shadowy mass of the house above, without a lamp of greeting, and shivered slightly.

"How still it is here, Percy!" she exclaimed, slowly resuming the climb up the steps.

"Yes, it's always quiet enough here. . . . Do you remember that first summer — when we used to go in swimming off the boat-house?"

"Yes, indeed!"

"And then you hit your head on that rock ! . . . I often think of that day — when I carried you up these steps to the house. How plucky you were !"

"Oh, not — not that ! Just ignorant of what it meant. Neither of us thought it would amount to anything."

"No — and yet I felt awfully sorry — I —"

"Yes, I know !" she said softly.

"So much has happened since — all because of your finding that sunken rock out there in the water !"

He tried to laugh, and was silent. The better man had come between him and the woman he loved, and he had loyally accepted his fate, ungrudgingly. Yet — it was the rock ! The wife understood what was in his mind. Just now it seemed as if the rock had been fatal to her after all. It had turned her life from the commonplace shallows for which she was fitted — from Dr. Percy, perhaps — into dangerous rapids where the turbulent current threatened her happiness. . . . No help now !

"Is there no one at the Eyrie ?" she asked, glancing again at the dark house.

"Not lately. . . . The doctor preferred to be alone. . . . Shall I get you a lantern ?"

"No ! I know my way perfectly, even in the dark."

At the door she turned and said to her companion: —

"Good night, Percy — I'll see you in the morning. Thank you for meeting me — and for all the rest !"

She held out her hand, but the little doctor refused to take it.

"Let me stay here until your husband comes back !"

"No, no," she replied hastily. "There's no telling when

he will come in — I shall go to bed at once. I'm tired. . . . Good night, Percy!"

"If there's anything I could do —" he stammered, loath to go.

"Thanks — there isn't."

"Let me get you a light."

"No!"

She stood before the door as if to bar the way. No one should see the desolation within her home, within her.

"Well, good-by, then!"

She watched him plunge into the woods, and called out cheerily: "Good night! Don't trip on the rock steps!" Then with a comforting sense of the kindness of this commonplace young man, she opened the door and groped her way into her home.

After a time she found a candle, and by its tiny flame she could see the careless confusion of the large living-room. A camp bed had been pitched before the fireplace. The blankets were tossed back as if its occupant had leaped hastily from his bed unmindful of his surroundings. Charred embers of logs lay in the fireplace, and the gray ashes had blown about the floor, covering chairs and tables with the dust of long neglect. On her precious old mahogany sideboard there were dirty glasses, a flask, and several medicine bottles, the remains of food, and an oar-lock.

She looked disgustedly at the untidy room.

She had left servants and a competent housekeeper to care for the house and her husband, but he had evidently got rid of them all, preferring his own camp ways. He had always disliked personal service, and he was curiously slovenly

for a man so skilful and neat about his work. When she left, he had straightway returned to the savage that was in him ! All this dirty disorder emphasized to her the deep difference between them, — an essential, elemental difference between the Wild One and her civilized self, with her dainty tastes, her refined habits. Standing there in her neat travelling dress, with her little bag and dangling gold chain and ornaments, she felt that she was another sort of being from this man, who preferred to live in dirt and disorder. Cleanliness was her personal god — perfect suburban cleanliness; it meant to her comfort and decency.

With a gesture of despair she raised her skirt and picked her way out of the neglected room and went up-stairs. Her own large chamber was as she had left it, — untouched, unentered. She threw open the casement windows and looked out into the September night, glowing with starlight, with a powdery wreath of mist around the edge of the still Lake. She had never in all her life felt so much alone as now.

She threw herself as she was upon the bed and lay there long hours in the silent house, waiting for her husband to return, thinking, — thinking ceaselessly over the long path of her brief married life. Something told her that it was over, — the battle lost before it had begun. Where had come the parting of the ways ? She had been a loyal, loving, devoted wife, all that a good woman should be, to her eccentric mate. She had always striven for the best for him, for the two little girls — for the family interest. A feeling of anger with him, who had wrecked her life, with life itself that had caught her deceitfully by a dream and driven her to destruction,

choked her. She was all that any man might desire for wife — and now! . . .

“Give me a good, plain, ordinary, sensible business man for a husband, who leaves the house with his newspaper after breakfast and comes back at night from his work, tired out and ready to be fed and amused!”

She had once thought these words of her mother’s plebeian, expressing a low ideal, but now they seemed to embody the last wisdom on the marriage situation.

“No genius for me!” Vera had said, laughing.

They were the words of a true woman, who knew her own nature.

It was long past midnight, and sleep would not come. She rose impatiently and looked forth upon the dying night. Somewhere out in that misty gray world of land and water he was with another woman. The room stifled her. She went down to the veranda. Should she go away before she saw him? She might get the early express southward, and on the morrow be in the city with friends instead of giving battle with a wayward, alien will. . . . There were other men in the wide world, and she was young. . . .

Swiftly she struck into the old path that ran through the dark firs to the little stone house. Her feet stumbled over rocks and roots in the neglected path, but she sped on, more quickly, while the slow dawn came faintly through the stiff black branches of the forest — sped on blindly.

VII

AT the fork in the path above the Spring, she hesitated, then turned towards her old home. She paused before the closed door and, instead of entering, followed the worn path around the house to the garden and sank upon the bench at the edge of the cliff. She noted the signs of recent work in the rank growths that she herself had planted long ago and then abandoned. Another woman had dared to enter her garden and trim the weeds there !

The dawn came on apace. The sun lifted over the eastern hills, illuminating with broad bands of fiery colors the gray clouds. For a few minutes the sky exhibited the glory of the sun's majestic ascension into the cloudy heavens, but the royal scene did not arouse the attention of the waiting woman. Her eyes searched the misty grayness that disguised the waters beneath her. A sea of mist covered all the lowlands and their well-known landmarks, erasing even the bold contour of the lake shore. It was as if a new world had suddenly been made out of the old, familiar one, — a world of mist beneath, uncertain, vague, a world of rose and saffron and gold above, which she would not see.

Suddenly, stirred by the rising wind, the sea of mist parted, revealing a stretch of black water, and after a time she could perceive afar off a tiny moving object, a speck upon the surface of the Lake, coming towards her out of the cloud bank.

Her eyes fastened upon it eagerly. It grew larger, clearer, advancing steadily in the lane of the sun's golden rays. She knew it was the canoe that held the wanderers! She caught the flash of a paddle in the sunlight. They were coming from the upper portage where she had so often been with her husband on their way into the northern woods. . . .

Leaning on the cold rock she watched the approaching canoe until she could distinguish the two figures in it,— the man in the stern, crouching, with his long sweep of arm as he drove the paddle through the water without a ripple, and the other figure less distinct facing him. The canoe swung around the opposite point into the Cove just beneath the cliff so that by leaning outwards the waiting woman could see their faces in the clear light of the dawn, could hear the soft impact of the canoe upon the sand.

The two were silent, as if they had come through speech to the repose of deep thought. The woman, her hands clasped before her, slightly bent forward, was gazing far away over the waters,— upon her lips a smile of joy that had come in sadness. Upon the man's face was a strange calm, a high content, as if at last he had struggled forth to the heights of his being and was now filled with a resistless purpose. The wife knew that look of lofty mastery: she recalled it from her dim past with a pang of regret—and awe. She had seen it on his face, when it had been born of youth and love and will. She had seen it long ago, within this little house. But his face had changed with the years, and the look of the healer in him had faded out of it.

This stranger now saw the mystery that had once been hers! With this other one he had restored himself to peace.

She leaped to her feet, stung with an intolerable sense of wrong, suffocated with inner rage, because of this theft of something that had once seemed indissolubly hers — albeit an unrecognized possession. For a moment she tried to think in her blindness what she should do now that they were so near at hand. She started swiftly down the path, — to strike, to tear apart, to destroy ! Then she stopped, arrested by a subtle fear. It was too late ! The power of revenge had already gone. The theft was complete. And a feeling of the uselessness of all struggle for the lost swept over her again, unnerving her will. There was nothing that she could do, — nothing that would avail to give her what had once been hers. Nothing ! It was the end.

Wracked by this conviction, she stood panting before the closed door of the stone house, her limbs trembling weakly. What could she do ? Crawl away, before the two in their content and high peace should find her here ? Fly from this spot where joy and sorrow had both overtaken her ! She who had sped northwards the day before, confident of her power, found herself before the fate that was on its way nerveless and weak. This was not what her excited imagination had pictured of vulgar intrigue between man and woman. It was, instead, the spiritual fact that she had been quick enough to read upon her husband's face. He had journeyed to another world, leaving her behind. Love, it seemed, came swift like lightning, and love went out, like flame, leaving the void. . . .

She heard the footsteps of the two coming up the rocky path, and drew back upon the worn stone of the doorstep, quivering, listening. They were still silent, each with his

thought, and did not see her. The woman stumbled once, and the man put out an arm to steady her. They looked into each other's eyes without words for a long moment, and then the woman turned to enter the house. There was in her eyes a strange light of triumph, of accomplished good, and upon her lips a smile of deep content.

As if some stranger, some servant about the place, stood in her way, she bent her head slightly, murmuring, "Please!" and put her hand upon the latch. The wife raised an arm to bar the way, but it fell. With that lingering smile of perfect peace the other pushed open the door, stepped within, and closed it noiselessly behind her. . . .

Husband and wife, thus left alone, faced each other. The calm serenity that she had seen when she had first caught sight of her husband still remained upon his untroubled face and in his quiet manner. This calm roused her woman's fury: that he could be unmoved while she despaired!

"So," she cried in a low voice, "you even brought her *here*. Into our home!"

"The house was no longer ours," he said gently. "You left it long ago — for another."

"But it was —" Her emotion stifled her, and she walked away.

"There was no other shelter at the time," he said gently. He spoke in a matter-of-fact tone, as if she had disturbed him in a deep preoccupation.

"Where have you been with her?" she demanded savagely.

"To my old cabin in the Valley of the Seven Lakes," he answered readily.

To that House of Evil, within the dark hills, where he had always refused to take her — his wife — he had gone with this strange woman ! The House of Evil — well named !

He walked along by her side in the narrow path towards the Eyrie. She hurried almost to a run, wishing to escape from him, — and to strike him.

“So you came back,” he said in the same mild tone. “You did not send word that you were coming ?”

“It was well that I did not !”

“What do you mean ?”

He turned upon her suddenly with blazing eyes, — those terrible eyes she had always feared to rouse.

“You know ! You know !” she cried, with all the bitterness of her defeated heart.

The doctor walked on slightly in advance, listening quietly, making no attempt to curb the flood of accusation, reproach, despair, that poured from his wife’s lips.

“To think that after all I have given up for you it should come to this !” she wailed.

“Given up for me — what ?” he asked, with the flicker of a cold smile.

“My whole life ! My position in the world, friends, everything that I might have had !”

“So that is what our marriage has been to you, — a sacrifice of your life, your friends, your position ?”

“As long as you loved me I did not care !” she cried, holding to her sentimental ideal in self-justification.

“And yet, even from the first, it seems to me you were not content without —”

He waved his hand to complete the thought. And again the torrent of her anger broke forth, with all the fury of loss, and she heaped her scorn upon him — recalling his outcast state in the old days, the Colonel's ugly phrase, — "your dope-fiend," — recounting the sacrifices she had made to become his wife. In her sense of wrong long suffered, she forgot pride and shame and the memory of old love. He had been neither good father nor faithful husband, she said, in her terrible need to make him suffer as she herself was suffering. He listened calmly.

None of her bitter darts, it seemed to her, reached fully home, — no fierce taunt, nor pitiful plea. He was incased in a supreme indifference, a lofty preoccupation with his own purpose. Thus they reached the Eyrie, and she flung open the door, revealing the disorder of the place in the full daylight. She pointed to it mutely, as if somehow it proved her case against him and shrugged her shoulders in final disgust and despair. He stood waiting for the end, and when it seemed to have come, when she had flung herself upon the lounge and lay exhausted, he turned to the door as if he would leave. She started and cried:—

"You are going back to her! . . . Don't lie to me! You —"

"I do not lie," he said quietly. "What is it you wish to know?"

"That woman —"

"Well?"

She paused in her wild outburst, perceiving for the moment the precipice before her.

"What is it?" he repeated.

“You love her !”

He waited.

“There is no love for me !” she gasped weakly.

“Was that not plain — long before ?” he asked coldly.

“But — but —” In her whirling mind she realized that she had known it for a long time — that the unearthly glamour of her youth had faded like the glow of the northern lights, and what remained between them had not been love. And it was to this other glow, — desire, passion, — that she had trusted, — passion fitfully flaming, in man’s way, dying to be reborn at her touch. Now she saw that desire does not bind the spirit. She stood before her man abjectly, without a hold upon him.

“So — you will leave me,” she gasped. “It is the end ?”

“The end was long since.”

“You will leave me !” she cried hoarsely.

“We will settle all that when it is time,” he said, turning to the door once more.

“You are going to her !” she cried.

He turned and looked at her calmly.

“Yes !” and he was gone.

VIII

AFTER her husband had left, she went to her room to fetch her wraps and bag, with a vague purpose of going somewhere at once, until the night express was due. Then she thought of Dr. Percy, who would surely come to see her sometime to-day. He might help her — at least he would ferry her across the Lake to the hotel. She felt suddenly helpless, like a child lost on a city street in a strange world of confusing demands. She must get to her children, to her mother, to her friends, in order that she might feel the reality of things once more. . . . She would not stay in this house another day with an alien man.

She started to leave, but she could not go. Her feeling of competence, her readiness to meet emergencies of the day before, had utterly deserted her. She was weak and helpless before her fate like any other woman. Why? Because of her husband's conduct, she said. But she did not know that he was guilty. Because she saw now that he did not love her. But she had known that in her heart before. Then because of *her*, this other woman who had slipped unawares into her place. Even against her she could not long maintain her first rage. The frail, worn creature, dressed all in black, who had passed her like a wraith at the cottage door, was no possessive woman to be struggled with. She was not the expected image of the seducer!

After all, what was her husband's relation with this forlorn creature? This was the all-important truth that she must know. At first her anger had carried her away into passionate abuse, — the defeat in her heart had made her mad. But, she said to herself now, if he had not been unfaithful to her in act, the situation was not hopeless. Womanlike she came back to the trivial question of fact, — the point of physical fidelity. That was the sole test which generations of her ancestors had implanted in her by which to judge the marriage bond. Anything — but that!

She walked up and down the veranda, debating. Perhaps her husband would come back, and they could calmly get to the bottom of things. But the noon hour passed, and the soft September afternoon wore away — and no one came to the Eyrie. Her worst suspicion was again confirmed.

“He went to her — and they have fled together!” she said to herself.

Her face burned with fresh anger, and now she waited no longer. She must have certainty! She ran swiftly down the path to the stone cottage. The golden light filtering through the thick branches of the firs dazzled her eyes. She closed them and rushed on, trusting to her feet. As she approached the end of the path, she controlled herself and began to walk quietly. At sight of the familiar gray wall a sudden faintness made her weak. Now she would know, surely! She crept to the door. It was ajar. She pushed it open — the room was empty! They had gone already, — the cowards! Guilty, of course, — the common story.

She entered the house. The large room was warm. A fire of faggots was dying on the hearth. The place seemed

curiously not her habitation, her old home, but another's. It had the peculiar atmosphere of another, who had just left. In a jar upon the window ledge some stalks of vivid red cardinal flowers glowed. On the couch before the fire the pillows were crushed, as though some one had just risen from them. This subtle presence of another made the place oppressive to her. She went over to her old chamber, but turned back. With a glance about the unfamiliar living room she started for the door, but her eye caught sight of a book lying on the table with a sheet of paper across the open leaves.

She seized the book eagerly, and the paper fell to the floor. It was a worn volume of poetry, — a cheap anthology of English poets, much read and marked. She knelt down and searched upon the floor for the paper that had fallen under the table. It was a leaf torn from the book, and on it, beneath the printed lines, was written in a small, wavering script in which the letters seemed to have been formed slowly, painfully: —

“My Healer ! The miracle has happened — I have known perfect joy ! Now I shall go back to my life and work. Farewell !” and beneath in even finer letters: — “No woman can bend the will of a true man.”

There was no signature. The letters of the “Farewell,” wavering at first, seemed to grow bolder, to run up at the end into a flourish of triumph.

She dropped the leaf on the table, and stood gazing before her, arrested, wondering. They had not gone together — the woman had fled alone. She could not understand. She heard a step outside that she knew must be her husband's. It was at this hour he made his round of evening visits to his

patients. He entered and looked about the empty room as if seeking some one, then went to the chamber door and knocked. As he turned away she pointed mutely to the paper. He read it at a glance, and holding it in his hand stood still, very still, scarce breathing. She did not dare to look at his face. . . .

She herself had become calm, after all the storm of the day, with a strange sad calm. Noiselessly she moved to the window, which was swung wide open, and looked out over the water. The sun was sinking down behind the still Lake in a cloudless sky. There was the perfect calm of a dying September day,—a wistful radiance in the air subtly chiming with the defeat of human hearts. It was the autumn vesper peace before the winter months of silence in the forest. The woman's eyes filled with tears for the first time that day, as over a hopeless death. Why was it so dead, so dead—the dream she had once dreamed here in this little room !

Suddenly her tear-filled eyes perceived a boat upon the water,—two men rowing a woman up the Lake. The woman's face was turned upward, as if the gaze were fastened on the house upon the cliff. The boat was taking this other one away — forever, she knew. She turned and saw her husband behind her, looking out into the Lake. He had seen the boat. He knew what it meant. Would he follow her ?

Holden turned towards the door, then stopped, as if his will had stayed a blind impulse. . . .

Time passed. She looked about the room, which seemed to her stranger than ever. It had become the sanctuary of another's life — *her* sanctuary. And she still shared

with them ! Oh, that could never be ! She must escape from this intolerable spot. . . . What had been of such intense importance before, — to know whether this other one had been his wholly in body as well as in soul, — was no longer her affair. For one moment of emotional illumination she rose above her tradition and was able to comprehend how immaterial this physical fact was. She would never ask, she would never know, more than she knew now. In some mysterious fashion these other two had been brought together at the crisis of their lives, and had risen together by some hidden communion to a definite purpose, which did not concern her.

“What shall we do ?” she asked, seating herself wearily on the couch, and staring into the fireplace, where the last of the faggots were crumbling into ashes.

At her words Holden started from the reverie in which he had stood and crossed to the fireplace. He stood there, leaning against the broad breast of stone in his familiar attitude, waiting for her to speak out her thought.

“I can’t stay here any longer,” she murmured with a gesture that seemed to include every object in the little house. “I must get away — go to my children.”

“Yes, the children will need you.”

“Now more than ever !”

He made no response, and she remarked: —

“I suppose you will stay on here.”

“No !”

She started, for an instant thinking that he meant after all to follow this woman.

“I shall stay here for a little while until I have settled

everything — and then I shall go !” He made a vague gesture.

“ You would never consider leaving before !” she exclaimed, thinking of all her futile efforts to move him away from the wilderness.

“ My work here has ended,” he said simply.

“ But where will you go ?”

“ To the city,” he replied promptly.

“ That is always what I urged you to do — and now when —”

“ There is a difference,” he interrupted. “ I am not going now to become a fashionable practitioner as you wished. I go,” he said slowly, “ out into the wilderness again — the wilderness of men, to work there !”

And she divined with a pang that in this formulation of the purpose of his life it was not herself, but that other woman, who had spurred him to the resolve,—the one who had the courage to leave him.

“ Oh, it makes no difference — now,” she said mournfully. And after a pause she murmured to herself, “ If that fire had only come down here to the Lake and driven us out !”

“ It would have been the same result,” he replied calmly. “ Accidents never alter the real pattern of things — some other circumstance would have placed us where we are to-night !”

While she was rebelliously pondering this idea, he continued slowly, quietly, positively, as if he would show her the naked truth of their tragedy:—

“ You don’t understand what has happened with us two.”

"I understand that you don't love me — probably never did!"

"Women can't see the deeper reasons, but it is well for us to be clear so far as two human beings ever can be clear with each other."

She waited, following him with her eyes as he strode back and forth before the empty hearth.

"I saved your life!"

She bowed her head between her hands.

"At that moment of fate, when I was low, you came thus by accident into my world — a creature finer, more daring, more beautiful, than I had ever seen!"

A little smile crept over the wife's tense lips. She raised her head, as if listening to a music long forgotten.

"At least so I made you out to myself, — though others did not see all that, perhaps. . . . Oh, we men — coarse brutes as you called us this morning in your anger — are often foolish poets. . . . I worshipped my image of you. I made you my creature of the heavens at whose touch I was ashamed. I rose from my slough — I cast out the dirt within me — lust and drink and despair. Men do that when they love — when they dream of heaven. With the light of your face before me I built this hut of stone — my temple for you, for my own soul that should be stainless for you! You were far away, wandering across the ocean, but to me you were here by my side always, as I laid stone upon stone in my temple, as I fought myself and conquered — to be fit for you to possess."

His eyes flashed, and his voice rose and fell in cadence to his thought. Then after a pause, in duller tones: —

"But that vision, which was with me night and day, was merely the creature of my own brain — that was not *you*!"

"Oh!"

"We men — brutes you named us — have that delirium sometimes. You call it romance, poetry, idealism, and love us for it. . . . Sometimes it is more real than life itself!"

His vibrating tones stirred her against her will.

"And you seemed to share my vision — that is also what happens with men. It is their egotism: they think the worshipped creature is one with them in their dreaming nonsense! It's the way they are commonly caught for marriage. Women like the songs their poets sing them, lovers' exaggerations, — the worship at their altar, the roses at their feet, — mad fancies we men poets spin about you earth folk creatures. . . . So I took you away with me to my shrine to make the life that never was on earth!"

He laughed.

"Shrine for my goddess of air!"

"I loved it, too," she protested.

"For a time you thought you loved it," he corrected; "you liked the strange wild place, the snow, the solitude — the worship and the love. For a time it is sweet to play the goddess. But it was not enough, — to be man's goddess in a stone hut in a wilderness. Poor fool of a man to think it ever could be enough! . . . It is not civilization, which women have made."

"But Eric," she protested slyly, "was it much I asked for, — only friends, a few clothes, the little human things we women love, — the gossip and the companionship of our kind? Why, even the country people about the woods

flock to the settlements to see one another ! Was it strange that after the life I had lived in my father's house I should feel lonely and want a little place of my own in my own world ? ”

“ Not strange for a woman — just human , ” he granted. “ You were no fool poet The mistake we made was to think you might be — like me ! ”

“ It's inhuman ! ”

“ Man's ideal must always be inhuman to the woman ! ”

“ It's unpractical — ”

“ Just friends and clothes, the gossip and the little place in the jostling world , ” he repeated. “ They are practical ? ”

“ And when I became a mother, I had another to think of, and afterwards another child, — two other beings to think of, beside you and myself . ”

“ Yes ! ”

“ And you yourself, Eric — we wives have to think of our men — what's really best for them. Was this the best place for your talents ? You were an able man — every one who knew said so, and said you would be lost up here in the woods. You ought to get out into the world and struggle with your equals there like other men It would have been better if I had made you do it at first. Then we should not have come to this ! ”

In her turn she became the accuser, and held up the ideal.

“ That is the way, — the ' practical ' way, best for woman and child and man to struggle for a little place in the civilized world ? ”

He laughed ironically, but she stoutly affirmed : —

“ Yes ! ”

"I had a work to do, woman — man's work, not merely to support a woman and her children and make a place for them in the world!"

His fist fell heavily on the table jarring the book of verses to the floor.

"You could do it like other men, then," she retorted. "They have their work to do, and women help them in it."

"My work was to make people whole — cure them of their worst disease, themselves, — not sell them prescriptions!"

"There are good doctors in the world," she insisted.

"But my place was here!"

"Have you done very differently here from the doctors you despise?" she asked, thrusting with quiet cruelty into his sore.

"That is true," he said dully. "After all, I have not done so differently — and that is why I am leaving. I have taken in those who could pay my price, and patched them. I have given them drugs to soothe their aches and save them from their sins. I have talked the platitudes and fooled them like all the others. But at first it was not so! Then I told them the truth, and that was why they began to come to me from the ends of the earth. But I failed."

"Oh, you only make yourself think that. It was a great success, everybody said so, until you began to get queer and do strange things."

He laughed softly.

"As long as I made money, I was sane — like the others."

"We have to have money!"

"Much money — always more money — more things, — more food, and service, and clothes, and friends, and travel,

— all the things that cost money. And when your uncle lost your father's fortune, there had to be more money so that your mother might be indulged as your father had indulged her."

"This is very sordid! I did not know that you begrudged me the money I spent, and what I've given to my poor mother."

"You did not know that money is blood,—nay more,— it is the spirit of the man coined? A doctor who makes fifty thousand dollars a year as I have done has coined his soul and sold it."

"I did not know that you felt this way about it," she replied coldly. In the world she knew, men made money if they were able to. Her husband was an able man, and therefore he should make money: it was a perfect syllogism.

"We never talked about money," he said; "that was my error. I knew you considered it vulgar to talk about money. Now we must begin, however, to talk seriously about money."

He told her briefly of his affairs, — how he had sent sums of money from time to time to their old friend Elport, who had put it into the account he had started some years before in Holden's name. There was altogether now a considerable amount of money in Elport's hands, which was to be hers from this time, and which for the present at least, possibly for always, she must live upon with her children. She was thus to be independent in a small way. She felt relieved, even in her preoccupation, to know that she would not be penniless.

"You could have gone on for years, Eric," she observed, "making money — perhaps you will yet!"

He shook his head.

"What made you change so all at once?" she asked.

"It was not all at once. Nothing ever is. . . . I had lost my power! If I had 'gone on,' as you wish, it would have come to an end sooner or later. I should have been found out, as so many others are. For in the end people are not wholly deceived. They know when the spirit has died by the lack of works. And rich people even more than the poor demand their money's worth."

"Your power will come back some day," she said confidently.

"God knows," he answered solemnly. "I shall not try to force it. If it ever comes again, I will not sell it for more than bread."

She shrugged her shoulders. With such resolve she had no sympathy. It was that sort of madness which had wrecked their marriage. He did not understand life, and he would not learn.

"It's all hopeless!" she exclaimed at last, rising wearily from the couch. "Why do we talk? It comes to the same thing, as it always does between a man and a woman,—you no longer care for me as you once did. You are tired of me!"

That was the farthest reach of her woman's philosophy. The love of her man, for which she had given her all, was hopelessly lost, and fatalistically she believed there was no real reason for her bereavement. The love charm that she once had for this male had lost its power — that was all!

"Love — or passion? . . . Love died here," he said softly, "when you first left its shrine!"

She looked up and down the stone walls of the little room in which their marriage had begun, — wonderingly, as if she hoped to find the lost talisman there.

“And what has there been all the years since between us ?”

“Passion and desire — the decent lust of marriage — compromise and patching — pretense and utter loneliness !”

“Oh !” she cried, as if his words were blows. “How can you say that ! You — the father of my children ! It is too awful !”

“It is the truth.”

“If it had not been for that woman,” she flamed resentfully, but before his stern look she became silent.

And after a time she said in a low voice:—

“What is ended is ended. I must go !”

With another look about the empty room she stepped slowly towards the door, and her hand upon the latch turned, — her last woman’s defiance of her fate on her lips, — “Somewhere in all this wide world there must be love for me — a man’s whole love — and *my* happiness !”

With this bitter cry she flung open the door to escape from the man who no longer loved her.

IX

THROUGH the open door there rushed at once a wave of acrid smoke. Outside, the luminous September night had become an inky black, through which the lights in the camp below glimmered uncertainly. The little valley within the circle of hills about the Cove seemed to be a pit of smoke. The fire, wherever it was, must be close at hand to fill the night of a sudden with such a volume of heavy smoke. But in no direction was there as yet a sign of flame.

The doctor followed his wife out of the house, and together they stood under the eaves, looking into the smoky darkness, trying to detect the origin of the fire, their hearts beating hard.

That constant menace of the desecrated wilderness — the forest fire — had not alarmed them this season. There had not been a fire within hundreds of miles of the Lake, although a scorching August and a rainless September had dried to tinder the forest and the cut-over lands. After the great fire of the year before, which had burned to the top of the northern mountains before it stayed, Holden had set old Gray Jack to clearing a broad lane, several rods in width, between the piece of thick woods which he owned — in which no cutting had ever been done — and the surrounding tract, filled with dry slashings and dead growth through which fire would run as through stubble. The hills that circled the

Healing Spring like the rim of a cup would form also a natural barrier to fire, unless the fatal flame should rise within this broad lane. The question now was whether fire had been carelessly started about the Spring itself or had leapt the cleared space unnoticed by the old man, whose nightly duty it was to patrol the lane from end to end of the property and look for signs of fire. Once within this protecting barrier fire would sweep resistlessly through the camp, the Eyrie, and all the thick forest along the southern shores of the Lake !

And this surely was no distant fire — or they would have felt the choking smoke before, while they were absorbed in themselves within the little house. It must be very close, and yet all was pitch dark, without a flame in any direction to indicate their peril. Suddenly, as they stood with beating hearts, straining eye and ear, a vivid red flame shot up from the hill top directly behind the Healing Spring. One single torch of black red flame, it shone evilly through the gulf of smoke. Then quickly there was lighted another, and another, as the flames leaped upon the resinous firs like wolves upon their prey. At the same moment a noise of confused voices came from the camp below, as of people suddenly roused from sleep running distractedly to and fro, calling to each other. One long cry, a wail of despair, rose from the smoky pit: —

“Fire ! Fire ! Oh, my God, the whole place is on fire !”

Then Holden started.

“Run to the Eyrie — get a boat !” he shouted to his wife, leaping forward down the steep path to the Spring. In a moment he had disappeared into the gulf of smoke and night. Helen lingered on for some moments, crouched

against the stone house, watching with fascinated eyes the flaming forest across the gulf. One after another the tall trees, like city lamps, caught fire and flamed. The roar of the fire as it rushed through the thick growth of firs was distinctly audible, every moment coming nearer. Its hot breath began to scorch her face, and the air was filled with flying points of flame. It seemed as if Holden's words had come true: the wilderness was taking at last its long delayed, often threatened revenge for the desecration men had committed within it! With a mighty roar, a hungry, licking mouth, the flames swept onward towards the flimsy dwellings of men, eating the dead remains of the wilderness as it cleaned the earth once more. It was the scourge, as Holden had once called it, — the scourge that followed wantonness and greed. . . .

When the sparks began to fall thickly about the stone house, Helen turned, looked back once at the blazing circle of the hills, then plunged into the forest path and spied blindly on through the choking smoke and the dark, until, exhausted, she stumbled into the clearing about the Eyrie. Without daring to wait to enter her home she dragged herself on hands and knees to the long flight of steps, down them to the boat-house, where she could rest and breathe. She debated with herself the possibility of saving some of the more precious things in the house, — a few of her clothes, the silver that Elport had given her, — but a shower of sparks on the roof of the boat-house, the dull glow of the advancing fire, and above all the fearful roar in the woods above, frightened her. She launched a canoe, flung herself into it, and paddled wildly out into the Lake. It was well that she had not hesi-

tated longer, for as she floated clear of the shore a stream of fleet flame shot down the hill behind, leaped thirty feet across the clearing, and in one mouthful licked up the rambling tinder box of the Eyrie. The light from its destruction was thrown far out, reddening the dark waters, and by it she could see for a few moments the flames at work within her bedroom, devouring her precious possessions. Tears started in her eyes at this new loss, of all the little things she had used and had made intimately hers. Then she turned her back upon the fire and began to paddle vigorously out of the intense heat into the open Lake. It was the end, — the end of all her life thus far. She said to herself that it was well the end should come in this swift manner, wiping out every bond that might bind her to her married life except her two children. A fierce calm succeeded her tears. The roaring fire roused the mood of destruction. . . . And Eric? With a shudder she refused to think of his possible fate in that smoky furnace.

Some time later in the night her canoe was picked up by Dr. Percy, who was towing behind his launch a trail of smaller boats filled with the people from the camp at the Healing Spring. He had seen Holden, he told Helen. Together they had worked desperately to gather the frightened patients — fortunately there were only a few of them left — and get them with the nurses into the boats. Then when all were ready to leave, and the young doctor was busy starting his engine, Holden had gone back into the camp, leaving word that they were not to wait, that he had his canoe and would follow shortly.

He had probably gone back to look for old Gray Jack, Dr. Percy thought. The old man was the only one of the

little settlement not accounted for. He had been seen late that afternoon about the Spring slightly intoxicated, muttering complaints and threats, maundering to himself as was his wont when in liquor. Where he got his liquor was always a mystery, as Holden had warned every one at the Settlement not to sell him drink. Probably the half-breeds, who still hung about the Lake peddling and fishing, brought it to him. At all events the last time he had been in this state the doctor had threatened to send him away from the camp and had chided the old fellow roughly, taking his bottle away from him. So now Dr. Percy suspected that the man, whose wits were not clear at the best, had either carelessly or maliciously set fire to the slashings near his cabin, and in this way satisfied his confused idea of revenging himself upon his old master. He lived by himself in a little log cabin he had built back of the Spring on that fire lane, which he was supposed to guard. "And I suspect," Dr. Percy said in a significant tone, "that's where the doctor went to look for him. But he could never get in there then!"

Near the other shore the little flotilla of boats and canoes was met by men who were starting out to help fight the forest fire. They were heading for the old landing at the south end of the Lake, where, if anywhere, the fire might be checked before it flashed across the river and started up the western side. Dr. Percy turned back with them, telling Helen that he would get word of Holden if he could. As the cheerless dawn began to make an uncertain light through the smoke fog that hung over the water, the little band of fugitives reached the Settlement and found refuge in the hotel.

All through that day, when nothing could be seen farther

than a few feet, rumors were rife. The little town lived in anxious terror. At first, word came that the fire had already leaped across the river, and with a veering wind was being driven towards them. Many had already left by the morning train, and another long train of freight cars was held in readiness with its engine to take the rest of the people if the worst should prove true. Later the rumor was that the fire had been checked, then that it had swung off into the Belle River Valley and was threatening the Settlement from the east. Another train of fugitives went out. But Helen waited — for what? She could not leave, at least until Dr. Percy came back. So all that dreary day she hung about the landing at the Lake with the crowd, trying to see through the smoky atmosphere, listening to the rumors, her heart dully aching. In the smoky dawn of the next day she was called to the door of her room by Dr. Percy, who had just returned from the fight with the fire, grimy, tattered, and exhausted.

“Have you seen him, Percy?” she asked with a curious calm.

“No! But there’s a man just in from the north who said that he saw some one leap into the Lake from the cliff over by the Cove. The man tried to get to him, but in the smoke and dark he lost his way, and came on without finding him.”

They were both silent. Dr. Percy said at last: —

“You know the doctor is a good swimmer! He’s probably got safe to one of the islands, or gone up north and landed back of the fire and is making his way around by the carry. I have sent men up there in a boat, and I’ll go myself as soon as I can get some food.”

So another day of weary waiting went by, but nothing further was discovered. At night Dr. Percy persuaded Helen to leave with him and the nurses, for there was no telling whether another train could get out, the fire having turned towards the railroad below the old landing.

"I believe he is all right!" Dr. Percy affirmed. "He knows how to take care of himself in the woods, and he is not a man to throw away his life for nothing. We shall get word from him in the city!"

Thus at last the wife left, escaped from the wilds which she had come to hate. For the last time she took that southward journey to the busy world she loved.

X

WHEN Holden turned back into the doomed camp after directing the others to leave without him, he had determined, as Dr. Percy thought, to make at least one attempt to find his old servant. He suspected that Gray Jack might be lying in a drunken stupor in that small hut he had built himself almost directly behind the Healing Spring on the edge of the camp property. If the fire had started there, as it seemed probable, it was small use to search for the old man. But he might have had sense enough to crawl back across the broad lane, or the fire in one of its unaccountable freaks might have spared the cabin — at least in the first rush of its fury. At any rate the doctor would not leave without doing what man could to find out his fate. Of late since his relapse the old man had been much on Holden's mind. He felt unreasonably responsible for him, as well as deeply attached to him.

Moreover, now that the end had come — that the camp was destroyed and the last of the patients had fled — he was unconsciously loath to leave the place until driven into the Lake by the flames. In this mood he made his way up the northern breast of the hills near the water, and after a wide detour approached the rear of the Healing Spring. So far he had been able to go outside the burned region, but as he crawled through the underbrush to the summit of the ridge of

circling hills he came once more into the area where the first destruction had been done. The trees were still burning, the blackened undergrowth smouldering. The pace had been so swift that already the mass of flame was two miles or more away, beyond the Eyrie, which was in ashes, hastening before the wind southwards to the end of the Lake. The choking smoke and the intense heat drove Holden back from the ridge the first time, but after resting himself in a swampy hollow he crawled once more upwards until he could look down into the bowl of the Healing Spring from behind. The grove was burning angrily, the fire finding the little buildings tougher meat than the dry woods. Again he was driven away by the heat and wormed himself slowly forward in the direction of Gray Jack's cabin. But the fire was so fierce, burning the tall trees, that he was forced to give up and return to the little swamp where he lay for hours half choked by the smoke. Towards the morning he resumed his search, and this time he was able to reach the smouldering remains of the cabin, wherein he thought he recognized the charred body of a man. The fire that old Gray Jack had started in his muddled state of mind was still eating at his body.

Once more Holden made his way back up the hill to the ridge above the Healing Spring. The wind had cleared the air somewhat of the heavy smoke, and there was light enough to see something of the devastation which the fire had wrought in the little grove below. The Spring itself was a puddle of steaming water at the foot of the blackened rock. A few charred stumps stood guard about it. The cement conduit that had been built to bring the water from the Spring to the baths was still intact, monument of man's contrivance,

and also the stone hospital building on which the doctor had worked the first summer of his marriage was standing roofless and windowless. The flames had passed through it and gutted it. All the other buildings had been razed to the ground: they were little mounds of ashes and charred lumber and twisted ironwork. In the gloomy light of the smoky morning the place presented the desolate face of complete destruction, all the more melancholy because of its few human remnants, worse than the burned forest itself.

For some time Holden remained there, staring down into the ruin. The Idealist might thus behold the picture of his ruined purpose, the fabric of his fair dream, which had melted to its elements before the heat of fire. . . . At last he turned away.

The fire was still at work in the forest between the Spring and the Eyrie, sending up a great cloud of smoke. But a peculiarity in the draft of the wind had saved the headland on which the stone cabin stood, grim and gray, with its bank of charred firs behind. It was the only thing in the valley that was as yet untouched, that was as it had been before! Holden made his way slowly through the hot embers back to his old home on the cliff. It was stained by the smoke and flame that had passed so close to its walls. Even then a tiny tongue of flame was eating at the oak door, which Holden brushed out with his foot. He dragged away some burning logs that might set fire to it, locked the door, and walked out to the edge of the cliff in the little garden. For a few moments he stood there irresolutely, then threw the heavy iron key far out into the Lake. It fell silently into the water. . . .

Thus the scourge had done its work. The wilderness had been revenged, and the weakness of man punished. Some day the desolation about the Healing Spring would be covered by a gentle growth of fresh green; the blackened hillsides would give birth to a new forest. But not for him! . . . With a last look at the ruin of his beautiful dream he leaped downwards into the Lake. When he came up he heard the call of some one on the water, the sound of oars. But without answering he swam steadily north up the Lake.



PART FIVE



I

THE wilderness of men! . . . These words came often to the stranger's lips, while he roamed the noisy maze of the great western city; and as solitary, alone, he traced his way up and down broad avenues, through narrow, silent streets, into the recesses of the city, the image of that other, far northern wilderness was always before him. In this vast, new, human wilderness the sun was ever blurred by day and the stars blotted by night with a thick pall of smoke. From the thronged streets, out of the lofty buildings jostling together went up a roar to the heavens mightier than any winter tempest sweeping through the forests. Even in the dead hours of night this human wilderness was never still, forever moaning as if a caged animal were dreaming troubled dreams. A checkerboard of ways divided its broad surface, and yet to the stranger it was a trackless waste, without memorable signs. From avenue to avenue, from street to street, it repeated itself endlessly, as if the law in the human wilderness was that all must be alike. Nevertheless, in spite of its monotony and squalor, to the man from the other wilderness it was mysteriously sympathetic and compelling. It spoke in myriad voices.

For days Holden wandered about the city, as once he had wandered through the valleys and the hills of the north, seeking to know his new home, to place himself in its maze. From the noisy, dirty terminal where he had been set down,

he passed through regions of railroads, factories, warehouses, slaughter pens, lumber-yards, where gross labor was being done ; through dull, drab streets where tier upon tier the workers were housed ; then on to more orderly, more open quarters, where the dwellings were larger, cleaner, where trees and grass began to appear ; on at last to the very edge of the prairie itself, where under scudding clouds of smoke isolated factories, clumps of dwellings, rose like islands in a gray sea. At last, he turned back — back to the centre of the wilderness, where the crowded streets divided the lofty, towered buildings, and up, up in these he went through the layers of busy workers, — up to the very summits of the peaks of steel and brick ! Far below lay the sprawling city in a smoky haze, reaching out on all sides to vague horizons. Black lines of railroads pierced the haze, running to other centres in all quarters of the land, — other wildernesses of men. And through the peopled maze meandered a sluggish, slimy stream, laden with traffic, bearing its burden of trade to be scattered afar over all the world.

Truly a wilderness of men ! Vast, swarming, verberant with life ! Mornings and evenings dark streams of human beings flowed to and fro across its surface, flooding and ebbing factory and office building ; human beings, — two millions and more of them, struggling for bread and happiness, camped here in the wilderness ! . . .

Everywhere might be seen the signs of doctors. The names were German, English, Polish, Lithuanian, — men of every race and nationality. Their signs hung in long fantastic festoons before drug stores, were nailed to the walls of brick and wood, or painted on glass window-panes. Doc-

tors for this and for that, — for every human ailment. Among them some were ignorant, some were vicious, and some were merely humanly weak and feeble. How many were true healers? There were thousands upon thousands of licensed practitioners, one for every hundred or two of human beings, — not counting the unlicensed and purely charlatan healers that abounded. There were in all more doctors than bakers or butchers or grocers; more doctors than masons or carpenters or tailors, — doctors at every corner, in every hotel, in every large dwelling-house, doctors in the quiet suburban streets, layers of doctors in the lofty office buildings. . . . Surely in this wilderness of men the healer was much in demand! . . .

Holden visited the medical schools, the hospitals, the dispensaries, — those accredited centres of the healing trade, — also the private hospitals and the sanitariums, and all the places where through charitable agencies healing was offered to the poor for nothing. He watched the city officers at their perfunctory duty of cleansing the city and guarding the public health. And the more he saw, the clearer it became to him that all were much alike, — the little doctors in the suburban streets selling their pills, despised by their more prosperous brothers in the richer sections of the city, with metal or glass signs before their office windows, and the leaders of the caste in their offices within the lofty buildings, attended by trained assistants. They were all alike engaged in the same trade, — with better or worse equipment, from the doctor with his tin sign hanging in the wind before the drug store to the great specialist in his private suite. They were exploiting the human body and the human soul for private profit.

Among the orthodox were many specialists, — for the eye and the ear, the nose and the throat, the feet, the head, the heart, the skin, the lungs, the intestines. Man's body was divided into numerous small principalities, and each province had its special priest or butcher or nurse. And these only of the strictly regular, orthodox sects of healer — legally permitted to hang out their trade signs and invite patients to submit themselves to their science, to patch and prescribe for them and charge fees.

In the same buildings with these orthodox, or in closely neighboring buildings, were housed all the unorthodox, — fakirs, irregulars, — osteopaths, faith healers, mind healers, physical culturists, Swamis, Exodites, Introdites, masseurs, etc., etc. — working cures by mind or muscle, — prophets of the soul or of the belly. Each had his special formula, his special explanation of the dire phenomena of sickness, — his magic symbol or private panacea, — to be sold for a price to those who could be induced to believe in them. These unorthodox healers of the great wilderness were not without reward, if without honor. Their signs were blazoned on hundreds of windows, all up and down great buildings; their shops were crowded with credulous searchers for life!

All these were of the professed members of the healing trade. But outside of them — beyond the realm of the orthodox and of the unorthodox alike — was the purely religious and mystical healer, attracting such as had come to reject science and pseudo-science alike, and preferred to trust their bodies to mere words, ideas, which at least were harmless. Holden in his trail through the human wilderness on Sundays passed the open doors of the temples where the

mystical healers gathered their followers. From these pretentious places of worship came often the sound of robust singing, and he might observe the votaries of the faith issuing from their worship, — the men silk-hatted ; the women in rustling or clinging garments of fashionable form, — a sleek and confident people rejoicing in a faith that preached health and prosperity in the same breath. These having rejected all healing of the physical sort, depending solely upon words, mumbling, gibberish, and incoherent ideas, seemed to be not the least intelligent, certainly not the least healthy and happy of the two millions in the wilderness ! They had uncovered the hypocrisy of science and pseudo-science, — of precedent and drug, — at least they had wiped the slate of knowledge clean of all errors. . . .

Doctors, doctors, doctors ! As many doctors as teachers, more doctors than ministers of the gospel. Some doctors doubtless working faithfully and doing their little good, — doctors trying to know and to see ; other doctors preying on the fears and the follies of feeble humanity — mere vultures these. Like all men there were the strong and the weak among them, the wise and the foolish ; but all licensed to sell their healing for a price. Humanity in the modern wilderness must be ailing, weak, and miserable to support these doctors with the labor of their hands, to buy with their earnings the advice of all these would-be healers, to swallow their drugs. Was every man, woman, and child in the city sick ?

Where among all these eager competitors should the stranger set up his tent, hang out his sign, and open his shop for the sick ? Where should he bark before *his* table of

charms? Among the high priests of the caste, the perfectly orthodox in the little suites of the lofty buildings, or among the quacks at the corner drug store? Among the flat buildings and hotels, or along the drab suburban streets? Should he hang out a tin, wood, metal, glass sign with the magic letters, — M.D.? “I — Frederick Holden — licensed by the commonwealth to heal, am come among you for your patronage! I will tell you truth for a price, I will give you advice, will make you well, — for a price.” . . . The healer on the drab streets got his dollar or two, the fashionable brother in the richer quarter a hundred or two, the renowned healer in the private office a thousand or more — which should it be? . . .

Thus Holden explored his new wilderness for many months, learning its trails, debating all these matters, examining its healing springs from laboratory to drug store. Often as he walked the streets, especially in early morning or at nightfall when the workers were going to and from their labor, he looked into the faces of the passers-by as if he were seeking some special one in the stream. Somewhere in the stream of woman-workers there was a remembered face, with deep eyes, — sad-glad eyes, — and determined feet, who trod her round of life triumphantly. It was the face of one who had come to him from the wilderness of men to point out the true path, and refusing happiness had gone back to take up her burden. In his heart he knew that he should never see that face again, yet he looked for it always.

At last the stranger took root in the thick of the factory district, not far from the spot where he had first begun to

search the city wilderness, — in a little brick box of a house, one of a dingy row set back from the street near the slimy river. On one side was a humming factory ; on the other a power-house pouring out clouds of thick smoke. At the corner was a swinging crane laden with doctors' signs. Near by was a thicket of tenements, saloons, houses of prostitution, decayed lodgings, cheap hotels, — the jungle of the wilderness, its heart.

He wrote Dr. Percy:—

... “Among others of the brethren of the trade in this neighborhood there is an old herb doctor, a man who peddles cocaine, an abortionist, an electrical massage fakir, — two or three merely ignorant botchers — a nest of us healers !”

So he hung out his sign over his door, — “Frederick Holden, Physician and Surgeon,” — a modest wooden board that could hardly be read across the street, — and within the dark little house he sat down to wait for the sick to come to him here, as they had come to him in the other wilderness. He waited many weeks before the first patient entered the brick house in search of aid. . . .

Holden was now nearly forty years of age, — at the crest of man's activity, ready if ever to do his work in the world, false paths having been explored and rejected, false lights exposed. Life had worked the spirit of the man until it was moulded to that permanent shape which is character. . . . Alone in the rank swamp of the city wilderness he awaited his task.

II

HERE one day Horace Elport found him. The fastidious old man — now aging and gray and distinguished — came down the squalid street, looking about the drab scene, turning up his nose quizzically. He did not like the coarser haunts of men : he had always chosen unerringly the sunnier side of the street, the cleaner path. Peering up at the grimy fronts of the houses, he tried to read the obliterated numbers, and finally, having detected the doctor's modest sign, he tiptoed daintily through the mud across the street, avoiding trucks and hucksters' carts with some sacrifice of his dignified equilibrium. The door of the old brick house was ajar, and he entered unannounced.

There were two patients waiting in the front room, an anaemic girl and a laborer with a bruised hand. Elport taking in the bare little room at a glance seated himself upon the hard wooden settle before the grate fire and neatly drew up his trousers at the knee, exposing his gray spats. A whimsical smile broke over his handsome face, which slowly settled into a look of meditation, as if he were trying to fathom in his mind the workings of a mysterious and alien nature. When at last he was admitted to the little rear room that the doctor used for his private office, the whimsical smile broke over his lips.

"I was passing through the city and thought I would look

you up," he said. "Percy gave me the address, but I had the devil of a time finding your place!"

He looked over the dingy room, which was shrouded in perpetual gloom on account of the factory wall behind the house. His glance rested inquiringly on Holden, who returned it with a calm smile. Even under the electric light, it was apparent that the doctor had lost his pallor, was in sound health, and was not moody. Filling a pipe from a box on the mantel, Holden settled himself in his surgical chair for talk.

"And why," Elport demanded, — "just here?"

"Why not? It is the heart of the city. . . . In the end one place is as good as another, I suppose, but intercourse between doctor and patient is a little readier here than in politer circles."

"Is it better worth while to treat that pale young woman and that frowsy workman than Mrs. Delamar, whom you turned away from your camp?"

"Sadie Laughlin is less likely to get intelligent help and advice than Mrs. Delamar!"

"Do they want honest and intelligent advice?"

"Some do. . . . I hold my own pretty well against the herb doctor and the other quacks. The people come — chiefly perhaps because I let them pay me what they can and when they want to!"

"And on those terms do they pay — anything?" the older man asked with a sceptical laugh.

"Almost all pay something, and considering what they have they are more honest than their more prosperous fellows. . . . I get all the money I need."

"They pay — and don't have to!"

"You paid me — more than I asked. Why not they?"

"Incorrigible idealist — ass!" the old man laughed.

Holden continued with a sigh:—

"The worst is that under the conditions of their lives one can do little more than patch at them. They come and go — when they are in trouble. You hand them a poultice — that's all! Now that girl you saw out there should be in an institution. But there is no place to send her — she must work to live. I give her a tonic and try to teach her a little hygiene. Some day she will marry — and then?"

He broke off and added in a moment, as if summing up his experience: "What we need is an institutional medicine — like the army. The sick should be segregated from the well and placed where they can be treated best. That will come some day!"

"A state phalanstery — the Healing Spring on a national scale?"

Holden nodded.

"My dear fellow, it will not come in my time — nor yours!"

"No, but we are working towards it along with other ideals which seem now quite hopeless to you."

After a pause Elport reached forward and tapped the doctor with his thin hand.

"My dear fellow, you are an awful ass!"

"Very likely."

"Oh, I don't mean in giving up your camp after the fire, though you might easily have rebuilt it and made it better than ever. But I mean in the way you take life generally!"

Holden listened with an ironical smile, while the other talked on.

“I’m pretty nearly an old man now. You saved me from premature senility — and you saved my son from worse. So I have every right to abuse you, and I am going to ! I’ll free my mind at least, for I didn’t come a thousand miles to swap the time of day. . . . You take life hard and wrong ! Why not come in with the rest of us and be comfortable ?”

“I shouldn’t be comfortable.”

“You might have had almost anything in your line you went out for, — money, fame, friends, honors, — and you take *this* ! You bury yourself in this hole !”

“My hole suits me well enough.”

“But why sell yourself so cheap ?”

“I tried the other way once.”

“Do you feel your power here ?”

Holden looked at him sharply and replied after a time:—
“No, — not the power I once had ! That may never return.”

Elport did not understand. So he returned to his theme and dilated at some length on the sweet gospel of compromise, concluding eloquently:—

“It’s a good enough world, if you take it as other sensible fellows take it, be easy and content yourself with doing your best on your job and what good you find along the road. . . . You can’t reform the practice of medicine by giving Sadie Laughlins free treatment !”

Holden was silent.

“Well,” Elport sighed, resuming in another tone, — “there’s another matter and a personal one, too.”

He laid his hand affectionately on the doctor's arm.

"There's your family, — "

The doctor made no sign.

"You know they went to Europe this winter with Mrs. Goodnow?"

"So Percy wrote me."

"Helen wanted to educate the little girls, and it's easier over there. I advised their going over. They could hardly live as they would want to in this country on what they have."

"They have more than ninety per cent of American families ever have to spend," Holden replied quickly

"Perhaps, but that's all damn nonsense, you know! . . . You can't upset human nature by a fiat of your will, man. Your wife has been accustomed to the ways of the ten per cent."

"Unfortunately."

"You don't want your girls brought up over there, living in pensions and all that, wandering about from place to place, without a home."

"Let them come back here, then."

"Into this house, — this neighborhood?"

Elport made a grimace.

"They are both girls," Holden remarked bluntly, "and will probably become like their mother."

"A very good sort, let me add! . . . Are you quite willing to leave them entirely to their mother?"

Holden nodded.

"They'll need a father to launch them successfully, even if they are girls."

"I don't believe in that — they must make their own way, girls or boys!"

Elport whistled.

"And marry any one that comes along?"

"Whomever they choose. It is their life —"

"You are worse than an ass," the older man laughed ruefully. "You are quite mad!" He rose. "I am sorry if I have been inquisitive."

"You haven't been."

"I made a failure of my own marriage, as I told you once. . . . Does it have to be? She loves you still!"

The doctor turned away impatiently.

"We men, I fancy, rarely ever understand women's lives. They are made up of trivial things that seem unimportant to us — and *are* unimportant. What counts for them is mostly externals, — clothes, position, appearance, — all that. . . . For the girls' sakes, shouldn't you try to give them a little more of what all women want?"

"The surfaces? They have had too much of surfaces already!"

Elport mused. Dr. Percy had said something about another woman, — a mysterious patient who had probably caused the trouble in the first place between the doctor and his wife. It was the sort of tale that the old man comprehended only too well.

"We men have our little aberrations, too," he resumed probingly; "we are not always content with the fireside and the one face!"

Holden made an impatient gesture.

"Women have to forgive us sometimes. . . . But for

the children, for men and women themselves, — for everybody all around, — it is best for both to forgive and forget as far as they can — worry along somehow to the end."

With a certain pathos he developed further the golden wisdom of compromise, especially in family life. As the doctor remained obstinately mute, he said: —

"You know that Helen will never get a divorce, though her family have urged her to — it is a point of honor with her not to divorce!"

Holden made a gesture of indifference.

"The time will come when you will want those girls — and you will regret the empty years when you did not have them!"

At this point they were interrupted by a messenger from the drug store near by. A man had been crushed by a motor, and, as no other doctor happened to be at hand, Holden had been sent for.

"More patching!" he remarked, gathering up his little black bag. "But this time fortunately, if it's a bad case, he will be sent to a hospital."

Elport accompanied the doctor to the corner, but at sight of the curious crowd jammed in the store he hesitated.

"I'll come again some day," he said, pressing his friend's hand.

"Do! . . . Only let us not dig up the past — corpses must lie where they fall!"

"They are not corpses yet!" the old man exclaimed; but Holden was worming his way through the crowd.

Elport sauntered on towards the respectable quarter

where his hotel was situated, and as he went he murmured to himself :—

“Mad as ever! . . . But there’s something clean and fine in him, too. . . . That dear little woman and those two nice girls. . . . He’s an *ass* — an awful *ass*!”

Thus the voice of compromise, of worldly good sense, expressed itself upon the defeated idealist.

III

BUT the old man came again, and still again, to see the "madman," the "ass," calling at the little brick house by the river, or summoning him by telegram to dinner at his hotel. He respected the doctor's injunction about letting the corpses lie undisturbed, and yet he contrived to drop casually some information about Holden's family. "They're in Switzerland for the summer, — somewhere in the Engadine. I shall try to run down to Florence this autumn when I am over there to see them. . . . The old lady must be a great care to Helen. She's quite helpless now, and very fretful — the loss of her money has made her bitter." But that loss of the Goodnow fortune, he hinted, might not be permanent. All those waste lands, the cut-over districts, in which the Colonel had foolishly invested his sister's money in the hope of mineral discoveries, might pay some day. Settlers were coming into the district more and more and taking up farms. When the wilderness had been thoroughly tamed, it would yield an abundant second crop.

"I shall urge them to come back to America when I see them," he said. "They'll be happier here among their friends, and it will be better for the little girls. Of course they can't live in that big house of Mrs. Goodnow's — I've told them to sell it. It's rented now and gives a fair income, but such property deteriorates rapidly."

Holden made no comment. He seemed wholly dead and cold to his family and their interests. Otherwise the old man found him sound and sane, altogether more human than he had ever been, going about his work quietly, peacefully, living his narrow life in the midst of squalor, becoming gradually known in his quarter of the city wilderness as an honest, capable doctor, not greedy nor self-seeking, a good enough citizen according to the rough-and-ready standards of the neighborhood. He had had several encounters with the health officers when he reported their shameful neglect of duty, was pretty well disliked by his colleagues for his blunt speech,—they spread stories about him of a criminal past,—and latterly he had put himself in touch with some of the charitable agencies that worked in the district. He was recognized by them to be an educated, skilful physician — considerably above his environment — who was always ready, when asked, to give his services for nothing.

Thus he lived the little life he had chosen in the round of petty work,—taking the sick off the street, patching them the best he could, helping this girl, tending that mother, aware of the inadequate results he could obtain with these chance patients.

“You can’t put people on a solid basis, practising as we must,” he told his old friend. “There are a lot of nervous cases I see among working-people that should have months of treatment and attention. They come to me a few times and disappear.”

“Not so different from Jenks’s situation and Farrington’s, and that of all the other fellows who patch us decent, prosperous citizens when we come to them with our aches,”

Elport observed slyly. "We take the dose and listen to the talk and go our way and make ourselves sick again!"

Holden smiled. He was less stern these days, less denunciatory. The wisdom that comes to men who have measured themselves with their ideals and failed, was his at last.

"We all do what we can," he said, "but the system is wrong, — all wrong."

They were walking across the city in search of a new experimental laboratory for the study of cancer, which had recently been opened and which Elport wished to visit. Their way lay along one of those endless avenues of the city wilderness, monotonously alike block after block. The crowded thoroughfare was spotted with drug stores and doctors' signs, several for each block. Holden pointed to them to illustrate his contention.

"The whole profession should be institutionalized,—all medicine, all attempt at healing,—the schools, the hospitals, the clinics, the dispensaries, the doctors themselves. The state should control the schools and the hospitals and regulate the numbers and the work of the doctors, and should establish everywhere public dispensaries as their headquarters. No doctor should be permitted to receive fees from his patients. That is the root of the monstrous ignorance and malpractice of the profession,—the private fee. And the best doctors are beginning to realize it, and prefer to work for a salary in an institution. . . . Medical service should be free for all — and compulsory — provided by society as a whole for its own preservation and betterment. It would be an enormous saving in mere expense, and in human life, also. From the beginning the

fee has debased the healer's art — the greatest of all arts — made it a common trade. First there was the priest, who healed by prayer, then the medicine man and all the tribe of fakirs, preying upon humanity! . . . The priests were the original healers — it will be so again — we shall have a new priesthood of healing!" . . .

They found at last the modest building in which the private foundation for the investigation of cancer was housed. It was one of the many notable enterprises supported by public-spirited men of wealth that were springing into existence to meet the unformulated demands of society for an organized and scientific treatment of preventable diseases. After they had inspected the laboratories, the infirmary, the clinic, in company with an alert young doctor, they came out once more into the glaring sun of the July day under which the great city radiated heat. Elport expatiated on the efficiency of the institution.

"And that," he observed dryly, "is the fruit of private enterprise — the work of the rich you are so fond of abusing!"

"They are doing much to fight diseases — but that and all other similar places started here and there in different cities are but a scratching of the surface. Private effort, no matter how liberally it may be supported, will never be able to cover the human field properly, — to organize the great war on disease, to build up a healthy society. . . . The doctors and assistants in these research laboratories will all tell you the same thing. Private enterprises are but a few drops in the ocean that must be dealt with." He waved his hand forwards, as if calling upon the sweltering

jungle of the great city to testify for him. "And public hygiene and prevention is of more importance than any cure."

"You're in a great hurry, my friend!" Elport observed, wearily.

Elport had more than a general interest in the subject, although like many liberal-minded men of his generation he took a lively interest in all modern agencies for increasing civilization. His visit to the cancer institute, however, had a special object. An intimate friend, who had recently died, had left with him as trustee a very considerable sum of money to be applied as Elport thought best, — "for the aid of humanity"; and it was understood, so Elport confided to Holden, that he was himself to contribute to the object chosen a like amount, either now or by will.

"We often talked the matter over," he said, "and considered a great variety of objects, — education, for example. But we could not decide on just the right thing, and it is left to me because of my friend's sudden death to determine the direction of the gift." So he had resolved to make a serious inquiry, had travelled widely through the country to see institutions, medical and educational. "In the old days," he said, "we should have handed over our little bag of loot to some university or hospital or other well-recognized charity and let them use it. But to-day there seems to be such a wealth of opportunity, — so many new needs, things to be done by some individual if they are to be done at all!"

He was much taken by Holden's phrase, — "institu-

tional medicine." Like many an ardent individualist, who has prospered under the competitive régime, when he came to settle his account with the world, he turned insensibly towards a socialization of his energies. "I want something enduring," he said, — "something as you call it 'institutional.'"

His sickness and his acquaintance with Holden had first interested him in medicine, and especially in the problem of nervous diseases in modern society. The doctor's work in the city had impressed on him this new demand for the healer's art among the working-classes. Men and women also suffered increasingly from intricate, abnormal conditions of body and mind, due to the severe pressure of industrial life, the tyranny and monotony of specialized labor. The complex of modern society was thus taking its revenge upon the workers, who bore its heaviest burdens, and the bravest efforts must be exerted to adjust humanity to the new economic life.

"One can do little for these sufferers as they come and go in the private office," Holden insisted. "They need a greater healing spring—and a new healer!" he added slowly. "Our modern civilization, if it is to become a real civilization, and not go out again in blood and slavery, must be controlled by the doctors, and especially by the experts in brain processes,—must be guided and healed!"

As a result of this and other discussions, Elport wrote Holden a long letter, announcing his decision.

"We shall find an institution for the study and cure of nervous diseases, such as you and I have discussed. It must be here in this city, of course, where my friend worked and

made his money, — helped by the labor of many thousands, for whom, by the way, he always had more consideration and sympathy than the large employer of labor is usually supposed to have. . . .

“I have naturally been much concerned to find the right sort of man to be the head of such an undertaking, to shape its work and direct it into fruitful fields. Many names have been suggested to me, since my purpose has become known in your profession. The director should be a well-trained man, abreast of all the scientific movements in medicine of to-day, — not a mere successful practitioner, with a reputation and a sanitarium. And yet he must be something more than an investigator—a mere scientist like— and—” (Here he gave two well-known names in the science of medicine.) “He must have a passion for healing — the director at least! Such a man with attainments and reputation, who would be ready to sacrifice his gains from private practice and be satisfied with the modest salary we shall offer, is hard to find, as you can well imagine. But I think that I have found him. . . .

“Last night I dined with a number of doctors, and we talked over the plans. You remember Dr. Jenks? When I asked for names, he said without hesitation, ‘There is *one* man for you, and that is the fellow who ran that place up north in the woods, — Holden. If you can find him! I hear he’s gone off somewhere —’ Well, I have found him. . . . Will you take the job? You will have to move to this city, but your work for the New Hospital (as I have decided to call the foundation) will not be so very different from what you have always done or striven to do. You will be paid a sal-

ary, —" and he mentioned the amount proposed, which was generous enough as salaries range, though small compared with the incomes of successful physicians. "You will be free to practice privately if you choose, though I judge that the work will take all your time at first. And you will have the selection of your assistants, their training, — in fact, complete charge of the institution. Our work, starting in this comparatively small way, may develop into something that both of us will be proud of."

He suggested one development, which he had in mind and for which his own gift might be used, and that was the opening of a free sanitarium somewhere near the city to be used in connection with the Hospital, as a home for obstinate and curious cases.

"Don't decide offhand," he concluded, "but give yourself full time to think it over, my dear doctor. You can let me know the next time I am out there, which may not be for another month. . . . I think that you will find this work a tolerable compromise with life, — a practical solution for your over-difficult ideals!"

When, after a long discussion face to face, the two men had come to an understanding, Holden said: —

"I will undertake the work, then, on these conditions, — that I stay until I find you a better man to take my place, or train one up, and that I shall do no consultive or other work of private nature. . . . I have sufficiently explained to you my own failures and made clear to you that I am not now — and probably never shall be again — the sort of wonder-worker you are looking for, — the healer I might

once have been myself. But I can direct others to find the right road.

"I have no doubts!" Elport replied confidently.

"It may be that because of my failure — my wasted opportunity up there in the wilderness — I shall be all the better able to do your job. I know what to avoid. . . . When do you begin?"

"As soon as you will approve the architect's plans for the building."

That very evening Holden removed the sign from his door. On the morrow its disappearance would scarce be noticed, and in a few days it would not be remembered that he had lived and worked there for five years. Life flows and ebbs in the wilderness of men, — for the most part unnoticed.

That night he walked the streets, as of old, and the hunger in his heart rose as he looked into the faces of the passers-by, — the thousands of working women in the stream. Somewhere in that stream was a face he wished to see. But should he meet by chance those sad, deep eyes, — should he see that wasted face in the crowd, — there could be but the momentary greeting of eternal friends, destined each to follow his road apart from the other.

"No woman," she had said to him, "should bind the arms of a man!" . . . That word was spoken in the other wilderness of his youth, which had receded far into the background of his consciousness, like some sad, beautiful, and tragic event of the past upon which the doors of life had closed forever. Five years of calm, uneventful labor in this new wilderness of men had settled his destiny. It had given him

peace and sureness, but it had not given him back his great gift. As he had said to his old friend:—

“If I felt in me the power I might once have had, if I could fulfil the ideal of my youth, I would never harness myself to your cart — no matter how sound and true your purpose is !”

But the gift,— the healer’s special gift,—that superhuman power of insight and will,—once lost had gone forever. There remained a man, and a man’s work,— the patient, unceasing toil of the true doctor, laboring to achieve partial results. Patching, he would have called it once, with scorn. Now as he walked the murmuring streets of the human wilderness, and read again the innumerable signs of the would-be-healers before their doors, he was no longer scornful, no longer intolerant of them and their incompetence, their pretentious ignorance. They too “patched” with their limited power, as he with his, for the most part honestly, doomed by those human conditions that make men what they are, make life what it is, — doomed to large futilities, to base compromises, to inefficiency and waste. They suffered as he had suffered, from the strife of warring wills.

Thus for the end of the great Ideal ! . . . And the broken Idealist must learn to make man’s eternal compromise with his destiny,— content to be far less than a god, a little more than animal,— and dream of an unshattered Ideal.

IV

THE director's office was on the second floor of the plain brick building that housed the New Hospital ; the room looked seaward over the roofs of lower structures, and on a day like this in early spring, when the sun was warm and the soft southerly breeze brought up to the city something of the fragrance and the mystery of the sea, the director would often interrupt his labors at his desk to walk to the open window and gaze far away to the azure shore-line of the wide horizon. Such days as these the primitive instinct for the open came over him, — the call of the wilderness, — making his eyes wander from the printed page, his feet move restlessly, his mind chafe at the dull routine of accustomed thoughts.

This morning the director had been unusually nervous and irritable in conference with his assistants, — sharp and peremptory. After six years of hard work, absorbing and taxing all his energies, it was not strange that body and mind should crave relief. He must take that vacation which he had long denied himself, — a real vacation in the wilds, not a hasty professional trip to Europe, as he had been in the custom of doing latterly. Having made this resolve and settled with himself some details of management during his absence, he turned from the open window to tie himself down once more by will to the hated desk, when he caught sight of a young woman who had entered his office unobserved while his

back was towards the door. A single swift glance showed that she was neither nurse nor prospective patient. She was a mere girl, in spite of her long dress and her well rounded figure, — not more than sixteen at the most. She was dressed soberly enough as a girl of the richer classes would be. Her plain face was full of a healthy vitality, which showed itself as she smiled at the director timidly, yet with resolution.

“What is it ?” Holden asked gently.

The girl’s homely face reddened with embarrassment.

“Are you — the Director — Dr. Holden ?”

Holden nodded.

Again her timidity tied her tongue.

“Well ?”

“I — I want to be a doctor !” she burst forth with excitement, and relieved by having made this announcement she looked up again at him and smiled.

Holden laughed at the girlishness of the creature, — a homely, awkward kitten of a woman !

“We don’t make doctors here,” he replied. “Won’t you sit down ?” He pointed to a chair on the other side of his desk.

“I know !” Her face became puzzled once more, as if conflicting thoughts were troubling her mind. “But you are a very great doctor !”

“How do you know that ?”

“Dr. Percy said so !”

“Dr. Percy —”

“Dr. Farold, I should say, but mama and every one calls him just Dr. Percy.”

“And who are you ?” Holden demanded quickly.

The girl looked at him with clear, untroubled eyes, and this time she did not blush.

"I am Dorothy — and you are my father," she announced quite naturally.

For a few moments Holden made no reply, merely looking at the girl, who withstood his glance firmly.

"I'm the younger, you know," she explained in her clear, unchildish voice. "Nell is nearly two years older. She's quite grown up and goes to parties."

"Are you still living in Lawndale?" her father asked.

"Yes — but we've come to the city for the winter. Nell and mama wanted to see more people, and I had finished at Miss Rabbit's — the school, you know!"

"So," Holden resumed after a pause, "you want to become a doctor?"

"Yes!" the girl exclaimed with a quick return of enthusiasm, color again flushing her face. "Dr. Percy said I would have to go to college first. But mama and Aunt Vera don't believe in college for women. They're quite old-fashioned, you know. Girls didn't go much to college when they were young. . . . Nell is the same way. She liked Miss Rabbit's, and I hated it. Just little snips of things to learn in books, you know, — nothing interesting, — literature and art and languages, all the ladylike things! Such rot, don't you think?"

They both laughed. The girl talked on freely and eagerly, now that she was launched upon the real subject, — herself. She assumed that her listener was as much interested in that subject as she, and she confided to him with great clearness and emphasis her positive views of life.

"I mean a real university," she observed, "not a woman's college — that's only another sort of boarding school!" and in defence of her scheme, she said casually, "You see I shall never marry."

Holden smiled, and she explained hastily:—

"I'm not good looking enough! Nell is very pretty, you know, — just like mama, as like as two sisters every one says. But I'm — the homely one!"

She stopped precipitately, with a quizzical little smile, as if she were on the point of carrying out her grandmother's comparison of the younger girl to her father. In the family it was always said, "And Dorothy is as plain as her father, and that is saying a good deal!" Holden seemed to divine the comparison, and again they laughed in perfect sympathy.

It was manifest that the young girl, in spite of her lovely brown hair pushing out from her little hat, and the freshness and vitality of her youth, was homely; she had the heavy nose, the rugged and bony features, characteristic of her father.

"Some homely women marry," the doctor ventured.

"Of course — but I don't care for boys. They never like *me* either. Mama says I haven't the social instinct."

"Hum," the father commented. "That isn't always necessary for happy marriage."

"But I mean to be a doctor!"

"So you've decided on medicine?"

"Yes! I've always wanted to be a doctor ever since I was a little thing."

She hesitated, then spoke out more shyly: "Of course I knew about you! How you saved mama's life, and became

a great doctor, and had a wonderful hospital up in the woods for sick people. Aunt Vera told me all that and Dr. Percy, too. And how it was burned up! An awful shame, wasn't it?" and she added with suppressed excitement: "it must have been wonderful! The Spring — Dr. Percy showed me photographs of it — and the sick people coming to you from all over to get well. . . . How I wish I had been there!"

"But you were!" laughed the father, on whose pale face color was coming at this romantic version of his story.

"Oh! Just a baby, you know! I've tried and tried, but I can't remember a thing about it — not a thing. It's all Lawndale," she sighed. "And Miss Rabbit's!"

"So Dr. Percy told you about the Healing Spring?"

"Yes, I make him tell me everything, — about the pretty houses and the wonderful cures you had. . . . Why did you leave when it burned down?"

"Its time had passed," the doctor replied vaguely. "It had done its work."

"Of course," she remarked contentedly, "if you hadn't left you wouldn't be here now, — director of this hospital and so famous."

"Famous!"

"I know all about it! I read that article in the magazine about the New Hospital and made Dr. Percy bring me things you've published. But I can't understand them very well. There are so many foreign names, and Miss Rabbit didn't give us Latin!"

"You must find the articles rather tough reading."

"I'll understand 'em some day," she affirmed positively. "Aunt Vera said once to mama she always knew you would

be a famous man some day. Of course mama must have known that too, when —” She stopped abruptly in confusion. Holden leaned far back in his office chair and laughed heartily at the irony of the situation.

“So when they made such a fuss about my going to a real college and studying to become a doctor, I thought I’d just come to see you about it !”

“That was quite right !” Holden replied promptly.

“Of course you know all about such things. Isn’t there some way I can study medicine without going to college ?”

“But you’re too young.”

“I’m sixteen !”

“You must go to college first and find out if you really want —”

She shook her head impatiently at the suspicion of doubt as to her resolve.

“But there’s mama and Nell, and Aunt Vera and Grandma and Dr. Percy, — not one of them will help me. They all think that nice girls should go to parties and sit at home and talk to young men and get married.”

“I’ll help you !”

“I knew you would,” she said, laying her arms confidentially on the desk; “that’s why I came here ! . . . I wanted to see you, besides. I’ve meant to come and see you some day — ever since I knew you were my father.”

“Why didn’t you look me up before ?”

The girl’s eyes fell for a moment.

“Oh, you see there was mama — I didn’t want to hurt her feelings, of course. . . . But I’m older now, and I had a real reason for coming.”

"Yes."

Then they were both silent, as if the conversation were becoming painful. Suddenly the girl looked up courageously into her father's face.

"Won't you go and see mother about it?"

"I'll write her. . . . I'll see that you go to college and get a chance to study medicine if you still want to when you are ready."

"Thank you," she said simply, and after a moment added, "I think it would be best to talk it over with mama."

"That is not necessary — your mother might not care to see me," he said plainly.

"I think she would," the girl replied, meditatively. "You see she's never married again — like — like other women."

Holden nodded.

"Aunt Vera said we all ought to be proud of you!"

He laughed softly.

"Father!" the girl exclaimed bravely, looking up at him with her honest young eyes. "I don't see why two people can't be nice to each other — even if they don't — love each other any more!"

"They should be."

"I don't see why they can't be friends — and —"

She seemed to be groping in her young soul for words to express her sense of the folly and the injustice of the older generation to their young.

"Some day, Dorothy, your mother will tell you all about it —"

"No, I don't think I want to know about *that*," she said

positively. "It's your business and mother's. . . . But all the same you are my father!"

"Yes."

"It doesn't seem right that — the other should interfere — with —" She stammered in distress.

"No matter — I understand!" Holden said quickly. "You'd like me to see your mother and talk this all over with her?"

She nodded her head emphatically, and he could see in her dark eyes the tears brimming to the lids.

"Very well! When?"

"To-morrow afternoon, if you can — I'll come for you here, may I?"

"Good!"

"I've taken such a lot of your time — I must go now."

"I'm very glad you came!"

The young girl rose and buttoned her little jacket about her bust. When she stood up the impression of youth, buoyancy, vitality that she gave was even more marked. She looked out of the open window.

"What a jolly view you have up here!" She laughed gayly. "You'll show me all about the place sometime?"

"Whenever you like."

"That'll be great!"

She held out her large ungloved hand, — what her sister called, "Dorothy's paw." Another blush came over her eager homely face. "Good-by, father!" she said. "You've been awfully kind to me. . . . To-morrow then?"

And with a little fluttering smile on her large mouth, reminding Holden curiously of the mother whom she was so

much unlike, she slipped out of the door and was gone. He sat down again at his desk, then rose and walked about the office.

Youth with all its vigor, its hope, its passionate defence of its own right to live as it would, had been here in the room with him, and had left behind something of its health and fragrance. And in the man who for eleven years had absorbed himself wholly in his work, living less and less any personal life — for that had seemed completely ended for him — strange feelings like the call of springtime in the air awoke. It was *his* daughter, — his own flesh, — who had been with him in the room and spoke to him of his youth, — love and hope and longing. And now it was her life that must be considered, — the life of unspoiled youth !

Already the turbulent journey was turning — the crest of the hill had been mounted — and henceforth no matter what his man's labor might effect, what good deed he might accomplish, what fame acquire, it would always be the life of the young that counted, — the next generation, crowding impatiently on the road. . . . And this daughter of his had her own ideas about her future, her work — she wanted to be a doctor ! Proof that she was not completely the replica of her mother, as he had predicted to Elport she must be. . . . Of course he would go to see the mother, however disagreeable it might be to him personally to enter once more the closed doors of his passionate, defeated past.

V

HELEN HOLDEN had become stouter during these years of suburban inactivity. Yet she was still a pretty woman, with vigor and much of the sap of life. Her hair was turning prettily gray, especially over the right temple. . . . She was sitting opposite her husband in the drawing-room of that little house in which she had established her family for the winter, so that they might be near their friends, especially Vera Travers, who still lived on the neighboring avenue.

The meeting had been difficult for her, after all these years of separation, but having decided that it was best to yield to her child's wish in the matter, she had accomplished it bravely. She showed a complete self-possession, with a touch of conscious good breeding in a painful situation. Her manner revealed the mature complacency of the woman who had met her heart's defeat courageously, maintained her woman's dignity before the world, and brought up her daughters well according to her tradition. She was an unspoken reproach to the errant male who had gone his way and left her to go hers alone !

On the table near Holden's seat was placed conspicuously the number of a popular magazine that contained an eulogistic illustrated account of the New Hospital, with the photograph and a brief biography of its director, also a copy of the "Journal of Abnormal Psychology" containing one of

Holden's contributions, and several foreign journals as well in which the work of the Hospital had been commended. At sight of these Holden had smiled with amusement. . . .

"About the girl," he was saying to his wife; "Dorothy seems to have clear ideas what she wants to do with herself."

"Dorothy always has had her own ideas!"

"That's a good thing. . . . This is not a bad plan, I think."

Helen made a little gesture of despair.

"She's always been so queer —"

"Like her father," Holden suggested. "Well, as the languages and music didn't succeed with her, why not try science?"

"But a girl who doesn't have to earn her own living —"

"Many women are finding themselves nowadays that way," Holden suggested. "It's a good thing: it balances the other, sentimental influences of their lives."

"It's so unwomanly!"

Holden smiled, but held his tongue. . . .

So they sat there, talking like any two placid, middle-aged folk — friends, who had had their grievances in the past with each other, but to whom life had taught its hard lesson; moreover as man and woman who had the solid ground of a vital common interest between them. There was a light step in the hall, and Mrs. Holden interrupted herself to say:—

"Is that you, Nell? Come in here, please!"

A tall, graceful young woman entered the little room and hesitated at the sight of the stranger. The mother rising from her chair said in her brisk, perfectly natural tone:—

"This is your father, Nell. . . . Will you please ring for the tea, dear?"

"How do you do!" the girl said finally, in a formal manner, not offering her hand. It was apparent enough that this young woman had her views of things as well as her sister, and they were not the same.

"Where have you been, my dear?" her mother asked quickly.

"Just around to Aunty's."

"And was Ned with you? I hoped you'd bring him back!"

"Oh, did you, mother dear?"

The girl came over and put her arm caressingly about her mother, glancing with slight hostility across the room at the strange father. It might have been an affected pose, but it was quite effective. The girl and her mother were beautifully alike, — two versions of the same theme done at different moments of inspiration. The man, seeing them thus, close together, had a troubled vision of his far-off youth. The girl continued to eye him silently, perhaps resentfully, while the mother made tea and chatted on. She seemed like her mother in all respects, — very feminine and caressing, — and, as he divined, obstinate and wholly limited in her view of life. She must have been supple clay for the mother's moulding hand! The family imprint from grandmother and mother was on her, and she was nearly ready to give it to another generation of women. . . .

"And now about that college question," the doctor remarked as he replaced his tea-cup on the table.

"Dorothy going to college?" Nell asked with a disdainful little laugh.

"Oh, I give her up!" the mother sighed. "You and she will have to settle the matter by yourselves."

"She probably has some place in mind?"

"Wisconsin!" Nell remarked with scorn. "It's a co-educational university — one of those western places," she commented loftily, "where women wear men's pins and go to parties without chaperons!"

She made a little face, at which Holden laughed.

"Many girls go to colleges these days," he observed.

"Not girls in the best society," Miss Holden corrected.

"I don't know much about the best society," her father remarked, rising, "and I take it Dorothy doesn't either."

"There's Dorothy now," her sister said, "listening at the door. Come in, Sis!"

The younger girl, who had shyly disappeared after bringing her father to the house, now entered the room, casting quick glances from one parent to the other, as if to test the result of a dubious experiment. Then with flashing eyes she exclaimed in a loud whisper:—

"Is it all right, Dad?"

"Dad!" her sister murmured, shocked.

"Come over to my office to-morrow," her father replied, and shaking hands formally with the two others he left the room, his younger daughter at his heels.

Nothing had been said about further possible relations, the new footing of the family. But it seemed tacitly understood that Dorothy at least was to have free communication with her father, and for the present that was enough. Time, the solvent of human passions, worked many miracles and could be trusted to arrange this situation.

The doctor walking slowly up the avenue in the spring twilight meditated on the scene he had just left,— the mother and her two daughters. Helen had made a pleasant, agreeable background for the girls, and it must have required ingenuity to maintain a "decent social position," as the Goodnows called it, on their income, until lately when the lands in the far north had begun to pay. He had sent his wife half his salary of late years, and they had had also the income from that fund in Elport's hands. But three women living in this city to-day, trying to preserve a conventional social life — it took much money! . . .

Doubtless the older girl would marry. The younger one would make her own way as she pleased. She would not need the background long. . . . With these thoughts Holden reached the quiet hotel where he lived, as content with the accidents of life as most men of his years and experience.

VI

THIS stormy December day Helen Holden's little drawing-room had a festive air. There were flowers on all the tables, and in one corner a collection of small objects such as modern society uses to recognize the announcement of an engagement between two young people. A number of ladies were seated cosily before the fire, for whom Helen was preparing to pour coffee. . . .

"Two lumps, Vera? or is it three this winter?" the mistress of the house asked, poising a pretty hand over the sugar bowl.

"Three! And another on the side!" To the chorus of disapproval she protested, "I can't help it — I take cake, too! If I must be a fat old lady like my mother, why I must! I tell Gerald I've slaved over my figure for his sake long enough, and now he will have to take me as the good Lord meant me to be."

She laughed with a soft gurgle of content. Vera Travers laughed more easily in her comfortable middle age than she had laughed in her youth. She was quite plump and matronly, as indeed were all the others: life had treated them indulgently, at least on the physical plane.

"Why must women live in such horror of flesh!" exclaimed Mrs. Percy Farrold, a young woman who was evidently still struggling with her appetite.

"It's the men, of course!" Vera Travers retorted. "You're

still young enough, my dear, to captivate your husband with your pretty figure. . . . You stand ten minutes after each meal?" . . .

Chattering young voices and a burst of girlish laughter floated upstairs from the floor below, where the engagement luncheon was still in progress.

"They are having such a good time, bless their dear hearts!" Helen Holden observed purringly.

"An engaged girl like your Nell is the loveliest thing on earth," Nina Farrington sighed sentimentally. "How I remember my own time!"

"Life is never so good again for a woman!"

"That's quite true!" the mother affirmed with conviction. "I mean that Nell shall have all the happiness of it, — all the little things that go with it, clothes and parties and a pretty wedding. They mean so much to a woman — she remembers it all her life!"

Coffee having been dispensed, she settled back in her chair, and with a contented smile looked musingly at the fire. Vera Travers, who alone of those present could remember another engagement and marriage that had happened twenty years before smiled slyly to herself.

"Nell is so charming — so perfectly unspoiled," the women chanted in unison. "However could you keep anything as nice and fresh as that girl is at eighteen? And these days, when the girls know all the horrors before they are out! . . . She is too good for any mere man!"

"She is sweet," the mother admitted. "But of course Ned is not any mere man!"

There was a pleasant laugh.

"He is a nice boy," Vera Travers remarked, "and very clever in business they say, too!"

"Yes, he has had a remarkable success at the mills."

"Will they have to live up there in the country?" Mrs. Farrold inquired.

"Only for a short time. The Senator thinks another year will give Ned all the experience he needs, and then they will come to the city to settle."

"A year — oh, that's nothing, just a long honeymoon," some one observed.

"I shall miss her, of course," the mother said, "but Plantley is only four hours away — she will be here much of the time, of course."

"Helen, you do have luck!" Nina Farrington remarked flatly.

"Sometimes. But this is Nell's good fortune more than mine!"

"Oh, I don't know — a good son-in-law is a family blessing."

The mother smiled. She knew quite well that she was thoroughly envied by these other women with marriageable daughters because her Nell had captured the Senator's only son, — a wholly "nice" young man, unspoiled by dissipation and with more than ordinary "expectations." From the mothers' point of view the Senator's son was the ideal marriageable male. And the Holdens with their small means and inconspicuous social position had carried off one of the best prizes in woman's great game. Naturally a little envy was mixed with the sincere congratulations which mother and daughter had received this day. . . .

"Such a pity that Dr. Holden could not be here," one of the women observed.

"Yes, wasn't it provoking!" Mrs. Holden replied calmly.

"In Europe, isn't he?"

"Yes, they *would* give him that degree —"

"It's a great honor," Vera observed.

"Only two Americans have ever received it," Nina Farrington added coldly.

"He didn't seem to want it," Mrs. Holden remarked, "and declared he wouldn't cross the ocean for a piece of academic flummery like that. But Mr. Elport and the other trustees persuaded him that he must go for the sake of the Hospital. So he sailed last week. I wanted to put off the announcement of the engagement, but he wouldn't hear of it. . . . We had a cable from him this morning."

She reached over the table and handed the yellow slip to Vera Travers, who read aloud, — "Congratulation — may all that a woman's heart desires be yours. Father."

"Very pretty!"

Vera smiled, as she re-read the message, her lips murmuring the words, — "All that a woman's heart desires!"

Meanwhile little Mrs. Farrold was saying: —

"Your husband is such a distinguished man. . . . Percy says that the Hospital is known all over the medical world for the work it is doing."

"It's the fad — nervous diseases!" Mrs. Farrington pronounced.

"The doctor gives all the credit to the young men he has with him. He says he is living off their work — talks of resigning his position as director!"

"Oh!" the women protested.

"Of course," Mrs. Farrington observed, "he could make a great deal more money as a consultant, with his reputation."

"I don't believe he would practise if he resigned." . . .

The women fluttered for a time over other subjects, but reverted always after a little to their children, especially to Nell Holden.

"She is the perfect image of you, Mrs. Holden!" Mrs. Jenks remarked, holding forth her tiny gilt cup for more coffee. "I never saw such a complete likeness between mother and daughter."

"Many people say so," the mother admitted.

Mrs. Goodnow, who had come feebly into the room and was reading a novel with a gaudy cover over by the window, looked up at this and let the book fall from her palsied hands.

"Helen was better looking at that age — much better. She had a more delicate coloring, and she carried herself better," she quavered. "I was always very particular about that when she was a girl. But nowadays girls never think how they stand — not that Nell isn't a pretty girl. She has the Blake figure!"

As if she had delivered a final verdict, the old lady picked up her novel with her trembling fingers.

"I'm sure I can't tell them apart on the street!" Mrs. Jenks laughed. "It must be the Blake figure."

"That's because you don't see my gray hair!" Mrs. Holden observed, patting the roll of almost white hair which concealed the scar above her temple. "How is Percy?" she asked, turning to Mrs. Farrold.

"Growing terribly stout — he's gone South shooting, you know."

"You spoil him, I'm afraid."

"Yes, I do. . . . He has such a good time being spoiled ! It keeps men good-natured, don't you think?" . . .

The chattering voices that had been heard from time to time now came nearer, and a number of young girls entered the room filling it with liveliness and youth. Each mother looked straightway at her daughter, with an expression of parental affection mingled with shrewd criticism. Each one knew thoroughly her offspring's "good points," her chances in the woman's game, and each compared her own with the tall, graceful blonde girl, who had carried off the prize. They did not know what rebel ideas these little women might be concealing, what revolts they must meet in their children. They were "starting them properly" according to the conservative instincts of the sex, sure that life would justify them in the end for what they were doing.

For a few minutes there was more chatter, and then the company dispersed, Mrs. Percy Farrold taking a number of the girls with her in her car to the theatre, and the others soon going their respective ways.

Mrs. Holden waved a hand to the last guest departing in the blustering storm, then turned to Vera Travers, who had lingered.

"You're not going, Vera ? Now we can have a good talk !"

The two women drew nearer the fire, and discussed their friends.

"Percy married just the right woman for him," Vera mused.

"She's rather ordinary, don't you think?" Helen, who had always a proprietary air towards the little doctor, replied coldly.

"Perhaps, but she's rich and easy-going, gives him the opportunity to do what he likes."

"He's lost all interest in his profession!"

"No great loss to the profession, is it?"

"You never appreciated Dr. Percy!" . . .

"How Dorothy has grown," Vera remarked thoughtfully; "and she's better looking than she was, I think. She's coming to look more than ever like her father."

"Yes, she's not good looking."

"A strong face!"

"That's what every one says of a homely girl when they want to be polite. She's hopelessly plain, Vera, and you know it."

"She has beautiful eyes, like smouldering fires. . . . I always liked Dor, you know — such an original little piece!"

"You always liked her father," the mother retorted somewhat crisply.

"Yes, I did!"

"You should have married him!"

"No! I never would have married him, my dear — it took courage to do that!"

She laughed her low, gurgling laugh that combined the qualities of good nature and comfortable worldliness.

"Dorothy grows more like him all the time," the mother continued. "Always doing the unexpected thing, just as she used to carry stray kittens to school in her bag, and con-

ceal dirty little alley children in the attic when we had any one at dinner,— to feast them in the kitchen!"

"She graduates from that western university this spring, she tells me, and is going to the medical school in the fall."

"Yes, she is perfectly determined, and her father encourages her. She isn't likely to marry, so I leave her future to him. . . . Her father is bringing her up like a boy."

"She must be a great interest for the doctor."

"Oh, I don't know. . . . Nothing seems to interest him much except his work at that hospital."

For a time there was silence between the two old friends, and then Vera remarked with her intelligent smile:—

"After all, Nell, life has been pretty good to you!"

"Yes — things have come out better than might have been expected."

She held out her pretty hands to the warm fire, a look of placid contentment on her face, as of one who had made her little struggle and was now reaping the rewards.

"You see," she resumed, "the Colonel wasn't so foolish, after all, in putting mother's money in those cut-over lands up north. They're paying very well now. . . . Of course the doctor could make anything he chose to, if he did as Farrington and Jenks do. But he lets the younger men get all the plums. . . . However, Dorothy won't need much, probably, and Nell is provided for now."

Thus like an able general she reviewed her physical situation and found it favorable.

"Shall you go abroad again this spring, Vera?"

"Yes," her friend replied lazily. "It's best for Gerald. *He sees something of his family when he is over there!*"

"You've always spoiled him so, Vera!"

"I take care of him, dear man! I give him an allowance for bridge, limit his cigars, and make him swear off cocktails every three months. But I couldn't make him work. The experiments were too expensive!"

They laughed.

"Perhaps I began wrong, but I don't think so. . . . I've always paid all the bills,—even his clubs,—decided what we should do summers, selected the schools for the boys and girls, engaged the governesses and the tutors, and the chauffeurs."

"You did spoil him."

"But he's so comfortable and ornamental, Nell! . . . I didn't marry him to become famous. He gave the children a good name,—much better than mine. He is a good father when he remembers he has children. He has no vices,—big ones at least,—or none that he lets me know anything about. . . . Indeed, he's quite a perfect husband, if he wouldn't get so sleepy evenings!"

Thus the practical lady summed her experience of matrimony. She had entered it with clear eyes, and she had got from it what she had expected and what she judged was best worth while for her,—some healthy children, a good social position, and a handsome, amiable, if somewhat stupid companion. She had supplied the abundant means necessary for the enterprise, and also the energy, and the intelligence.

"At any rate," she resumed, as if completing a long line of meditation, "it is better than romance!"

Her soft eyes rested upon her friend's face.

"Yes," the other assented quickly. "Anything is better

than too much romance! I'm so glad Nell's young man is of the solid sort. They are both quite sensible over life."

"Romance means a few months of delirium, then agony, then disgust — for us women!"

"I wonder if there ever was a perfect marriage — like those the novelists describe?"

"I'm sure not," Vera laughed back promptly. "No more than perfect cooks; you find one who can make lovely pastry, but burns the roast, and another who is perfect on plain things, but useless for frills. . . . Perfections exist only in the land of nod, along with great Ideals and all that!"

"One must compromise."

"You go in for high romance, and it comes down to three meals a day or divorce."

"Anything is better than that!"

Vera looked at her friend with curiosity.

"Tell me, Nell," she said with the air of one who knew all the other's intimate secrets, "did you ever hear anything more about that woman at the Spring?"

Mrs. Holden shook her head.

"Has the doctor ever seen her again?"

"I don't believe he'd know her if he met her on the street! . . . Men are so queer!"

"Are you sure?"

Mrs. Holden nodded confidently.

"He's too much absorbed in his work ever to think of a woman these days. . . . Men outlive *that*, you know, my dear, in time."

"Sometimes it breaks out later on like a smouldering fire."

"Second childhood? . . . Well, I don't worry now," the

wife replied positively. "Everything comes out right if you only wait!"

"You are a wise woman, my little Nellie," Vera laughed affectionately.

"Women have to be wise — and wait, if they aren't to be jammed to the wall in life," Helen responded with assurance, and she continued unexpectedly with a further generalization of her life experience: "Men really don't know what they want. They think they do when they marry us, but it is *our* business to show them. I don't mean by lecturing, or managing, but by making them live as we know they should live. We know what is best for ourselves and for our children — and in the end men come to want that too, no matter how wild they may be at first. They know that we are right! Women are the force that keeps society together, makes civilized living possible."

"Directors of civilization, as that suffrage woman said," Vera mocked.

"Civilization itself," Helen corrected, rearranging the roses in the nearest vase. "Men don't understand women — good women, I mean."

"True! But we like the songs they make about us in our youth!"

"Of course — but that isn't real life."

"Well," exclaimed the other, rising with reluctance from her comfortable seat before the fire, "Nellie, you have been wonderful! . . . You've tamed your Wild One, as I never thought you could."

"He comes for dinner every Sunday — and twice during the week to tea. We are very good friends."

"For dinner on Sundays and twice a week for tea," Vera repeated, drawing on her gloves. "Nellie, you *are* wonderful! . . . But what are you going to do later on?"

"Oh, I never look ahead far. . . . It will arrange itself somehow, no doubt. . . . You see I shall be busy with Nell and her affairs. . . . And if mother is well enough we may go abroad another summer."

"I must go. . . . Just see how it is storming! . . . You'll send me Dorothy for Saturday? So sorry I haven't a seat for you, dear, but this is for the girls!"

Arm in arm the two friends left the cosey drawing-room.

Wild dreams are beautiful, and lovers' songs, and worship; but a good fireside, a secure place in the world for themselves and their children, — that is the highest wisdom of women, — so the sizzling log on the hearth in the comfortable drawing-room seemed to proclaim.

VII

NEVERTHELESS, it did not end as the wife thought. . . . Every morning for many years the distinguished director of the New Hospital had appeared at his office at the same early hour before most busy men had left their breakfast tables. The nurses and the young doctors attached to the hospital might have set their watches by the appearance on the brow of the little hill at the head of the street of a tall, slightly bent, thin figure that swung around the corner from the avenue and with a characteristically impatient stride came rapidly down the block, raising the head once before entering the doors of the hospital building to look far out seawards. Latterly the stride had become less swift, and the head was rarely raised. The doctor walked mechanically, his head bent in pursuit of some inner argument.

On a certain clear October morning when the air was thrilling to young blood, exciting feats of duty as well as errant impulses, the director appeared on the corner at the accustomed hour. But the brisk autumn morning did not quicken his leisurely pace. There had been a time when the autumn wine in the air, like that of to-day, would have been more potent than the soft spring invitation. He would have raised his eyes above the city buildings to the blue sky and seen that other land far away in the wilderness of the north with its silent lakes, dark winding streams, and wooded hill-sides, and his heart would have filled with wistful longing.

For to him who has lived in the wilderness this is the virile time of the year, with its clean sweeping winds, its purple color, the soft chant of insects in the underbrush, and the tender melancholy of the forests. At the turn of the year the mystery of the wilderness is felt most — change and death and the unknown. . . . But to-day it seemed that the Wild One would never again see the wilderness of his youth !

Another restlessness was upon him this morning, dragging his feet, — the restlessness of age. He had labored faithfully through the dust and heat of middle life, doing his best to clear the road for others. He had taught younger men, shown them how to become real healers of men. They were now doing the work that he had once done, — making the discoveries, making the cures. . . . Latterly he had talked of giving up his post of director. His work had been done, he said to himself. He had been path-maker, organizer, trainer, teacher — everything but the healer. The young men who had learned their art from him were doing the deeds he had hoped once to do. To them should be all the fame and the reward.

For in the clear light of his life's autumn he could see the windings of the backward road. That ideal of a great phalanstery of healing that he had dreamed of in his youth, that he had attempted to create in the wilderness by the Healing Spring, was partially fulfilled in this modern city institution for the care of nervous diseases. He saw himself without shadow. Once he might have been the great healer men seek in their weakness, if he had given himself sternly and fully, and rejected all illusions. He had yielded first to the

illusion of young love, with its wild, impossible dream, then to the grosser illusions of manhood, — lust, and pride, and greed. Then had come the scourge of fire and wiped his efforts from the earth, casting him out into the wilderness of men. And there he had become good citizen, faithful worker, builder of this new temple of healing, — with glimpses of the inner shrine. Others must come, stronger than he, to build on his foundation, — to become real healers of men. For youth has always this promise of bearing forward the flaming torch into the dark, if it does not falter, does not sell itself basely.

Yes ! It was all clear, the devious winding road. And now it was time that he should step aside, give place to that youth, ever new, in whom the hope of the world must always lie. His doctor girl had gone forth by herself to a hospital in a small western town, and the older daughter had a girl child of her own, — absorbing care for the grandmother. The next generation was already in the middle of the stage, carrying on the struggle. . . .

Thus in unseeing meditation the doctor reached the wide door of the hospital, where his feet paused instinctively. A number of young men were loitering about the entrance as usual; they looked at their distinguished chief with the curious, half shy eyes of youth and made way for him. But he did not enter the building. A young man whom the doctor knew well came forward to speak to him. The old man bent his gray head to listen and laid a shrunken, trembling hand upon the young man's shoulder. A gentle smile broke over his sombre face, as if the mere touch of youth had dispelled the sadness of age. Years seemed to

drop from the bent figure,—the years of struggle and defeat, the years of achievement and compromise, as once more the feeling of youth stole over him, filling him with a strange exaltation. Suddenly he exclaimed:—

“Come with me, my boy!”

Those standing by, curiously watching the two, saw the old man retrace his steps up the street in the clear October sunlight, leaning upon the young man, and disappear around the corner. Thus he turned his back forever upon the hospital.

As the two mounted the street, jostled in the stream of hurrying youth intent upon its own desires, the old man was murmuring lightly into the ear of his companion:—

“My boy, I will take you to my home, up into the wilderness far to the north, among the lakes and the great forests and the silent hills!”

With his dreamy eyes he beheld already,—not the city street with its crowded faces and huddled buildings,—but the dark forest, the gleaming Lake, the snowy mountain peak in the wilderness of his youth. . . .

“And I will teach you the great secret,” he said to the young man,—“the secret of the healer, the secret of all true manhood. . . . The secret,” he whispered with a wistful smile, “we often miss upon the way. . . . Courage! The will to give all! . . . That is the secret.”

THE END



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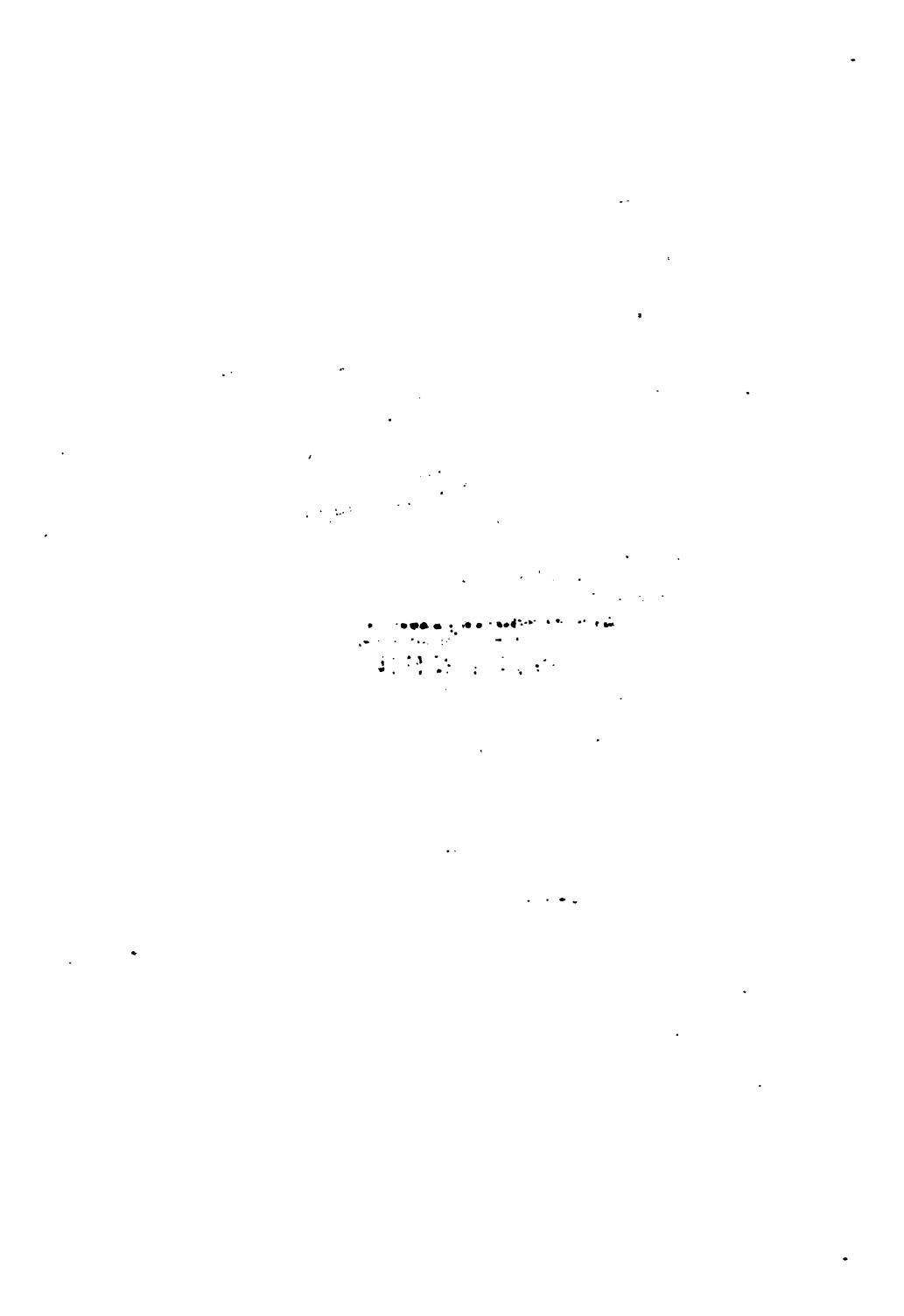
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